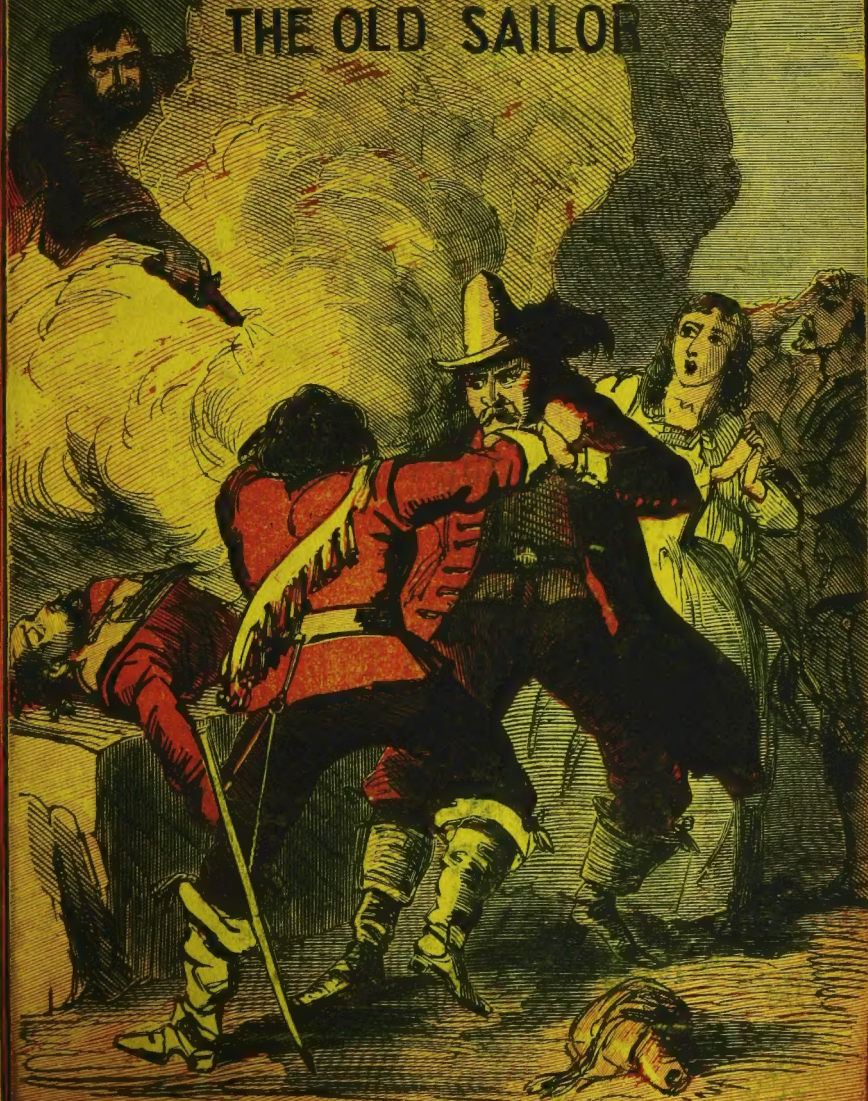


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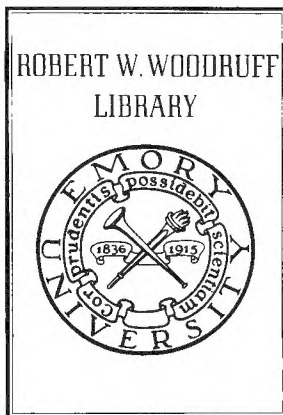
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THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER.



CHAPTER I.

“Oh! she was all that youth of beauty deems,
All that to love the loveliest object seems.”

THE reign of Charles II. was one continued series of conspiracies, plots, and executions; for, in the time of that monarch, the designing knave practised upon the credulity, or tampered with the honesty, of his neighbours; and men, who never entertained a single thought of leaguings against the sovereign or the throne, found themselves involved in traitorous proceedings, and amenable to penalties imposing a sacrifice—in some cases of property, and in others of existence. Thus, suspicion and mistrust operated upon the mind, and stirred up vengeful feelings; whilst the civil war, which had so long stained the neglected fields with the blood of kindred, had rendered the hearts of many of the people callous to the claims of country or of friend. Party feuds had divided the bonds of family affection; brother lifted his hand against brother; the child turned rebel to his parent, and the latter rent asunder those ties which the God of Nature himself created, to constitute the parent a protector of his child. Happy indeed were those who sought, in the retirement of life, for that tranquillity which the busy world denied, though even seclusion could not always screen them from danger, or secure them from attack.

The judges of Charles I. had undergone the sentences to which they had been condemned, but still all the adherents of the late Protector were closely watched, with a scrutinizing eye, as objects of jealous doubt, though the monarch who had succeeded to his father's throne through the influence and address of General Monck, affected moderation to his father's enemies.

Amongst the most active officers who had served in the Parliamentary army in the first instance, and who afterwards became a firm and attached follower of Cromwell during the Commonwealth, was Major Phillips, a man eminently suited for the times in which he lived. Bold and resolute, active, but wary, he seldom met with reverses; and when they did come, the apparently habitual coolness of his temperament prevented him from being betrayed into any hasty measure, or yielding, under any circumstances, to despondency.

At the Restoration the major saw at once that his only hope of safety consisted in quietly bending before the threatening storm; and by retiring into private life, he indulged an expectation that he should at least remain unmolested from indictment, though he could not cherish the most distant hope of escaping wholly from persecution. His decision was soon made, and speedily carried into execution. A farm of some magnitude in Northamptonshire was for sale. He became the purchaser—the sword was exchanged for the ploughshare, the spear for the pruning-hook; and in the veteran Farmer Phillips only his most intimate friend could recognise the once daring leader of a band of Roundheads.

The farmhouse, which was beautifully situated, had formerly been an extensive and celebrated abbey, but had fallen into dilapidation, even before the dissolution of the religious houses by Henry VIII.; and during the time of the civil contentions, it had occasionally served as a place of defence alternately

to the Royalists or Parliamentarians. The body of the building, in outward appearance, remained tolerably entire, presenting on one side a line of frontage of the most romantic nature; a fine lawn, gently sloping from the walls, lay before it, of a semicircular form, on the circumference of which, at right angles from the dwelling, was a noble avenue of dark chestnut trees, terminated by a lodge, with an immense archway, flanked on each side by low towers. On the opposite side of the building, at a short distance, was another large archway over which appeared a superb window, the whole mantled with the richest ivy, and from this, on either side, were broken walls and decayed turrets, whilst many a spot that had formerly been the cells of holy friars, was now converted into stalls for cattle, and barns for receiving the produce of the harvest. On the left of the building, looking from the avenue, arose large piles of ruins, some recently made so, and others of a much older date, strongly reminding the spectator of those Druidical monuments which were erected by the early Britons. Vast mounds of earth had also been thrown up, evidently for the purposes of fortifying the place by their bastion-like display; and on the outside of these were the half-burnt, half-broken remnants of a strong palisading, in many parts secured and strengthened by massive iron bands. Beyond this palisading gigantic pieces of rock lay piled upon each other, as if thrown in confused heaps by one tremendous effort of superhuman power. Numerous winding paths defiled amongst the masses; and the mouths of many chasms in the rifted stones gave a terrific wildness to the scene, well calculated to overawe the superstitious mind, and create a dread that it was a spot for unholy rites and incantations.

Farmer Phillips, with a wife modelled after the desires of his own heart, and a little daughter in her fifth year, whose childish beauty gave fair promise to set rivalry at defiance when arrived at maturity, took

up their abode at the abbey. The state in which the interior had been left by the Parliamentary troops, was not of the most perfect symmetry; but it was soon rendered, not only comfortable for its inmates, but also, by dint of rubbing, polishing, and other means, it regained much of its ancient splendour.

The ground belonging to the farm was principally upland, as the building stood in a sort of hollow dell of considerable extent, having at the back part an almost perpendicular ascent to the summit of a lofty steep. From the entrance of the avenue in front, a sweeping rise of about a mile in extent came to a break in the side of the hill, along which ran the main road; and above this, the hill again rose in towering grandeur. To the right, from the lawn, the vale gradually descended, but winding between the eminences on either side, prevented the eye from penetrating far. Most of the land was devoted to grazing; but here and there patches of corn, or fields of turnips, served to relieve the monotony; whilst many a dark wood frowned with gloom amidst the bright green of the daisy-spangled meadows.

The farmer had much to do at first; but patience and perseverance surmounted every obstacle, and he ultimately had the satisfaction of seeing his labours crowned with complete success. His time was wholly occupied, and except an occasional inmate, who found a shelter from persecution or an asylum from an enemy, few persons ever visited the abbey. Still the farmer's hospitality to the poor was only bounded by discretion and prudence, and his unremitting attention to their personal wants rendered him much beloved by the labouring classes; whilst the kindness and urbanity of Mrs. Phillips endeared her to the peasantry for miles around.

But there was an ambitious spirit lurking, like a demon, in the farmer's heart. In early life he had been a man of strong passions and indulgences, and it was only by incessant watchfulness over his besetting

sin that he held it under complete control. Nevertheless, as years passed on and he saw with pain many of his old associates suffering under the harrow of oppression, his breast was filled with indignation, and he longed again to clasp the battle brand, and strike for liberty. His country, too, for whose freedom he had fought and bled, was governed by pampered minions, and its councils weakened and distracted by foul conspiracies. The latent spark, which had long been smothering, seemed ready to burst forth; but the remembrance of those whose shield he was bound by every tie to be, restrained his impetuosity, and the spark only glowed when some fresh victim sought for his protection and concealment.

Nine years had elapsed from their first occupying the abbey, when Mrs. Phillips was suddenly seized with illness, which in a short time proved fatal. Seldom has there been a pair so fondly and faithfully attached to each other as the farmer and his wife; but the hand was now raised that was to separate them, and the decree of divorce already bore the impress of the inexorable monarch of the grave. But with her there was a feeling of triumph over the King of Terrors,—a conviction that death had lost the sting which rendered his visit terrible; and though the soul, still shackled by its dust and ashes, shrunk from the passage of the dark and unknown valley, yet there was a firm though humble reliance upon HIM whose promises were sure.

The silver cord was rapidly loosening, the golden bowl was suspended by the slightest thread, when the farmer knelt by the side of his expiring wife, and in a strong clear voice, though frequently broken by agitation, he poured forth his pious aspirations that they might accompany the redeemed and purified spirit of his beloved partner to the throne of everlasting light. He prayed that help from above might be given her in that hour of trial,—that her faith might be strengthened; and though the swelling waves might

endeavour to engulf her in the abyss of black despair, yet that her feet should continue firm, and fixed upon the Rock of Ages. He prayed for himself for patient resignation to the Divine will; and though she could never return to him, yet that he might go to her. He prayed for the tender offspring that bowed her head by his side; that though riven from the parent stem, she might not wither, but, rooted in the fear and admonition of the LORD, she might flourish like a goodly tree, and bring forth the fruits of a virtuous and a holy life.

The departing Christian stretched forth her hand, cold and clammy with the dews of death; she took those of her husband and her child, and feebly pressed them between her own as she uttered, "And now, LORD, what wait I for? truly my hope is in THEE!" Her eyes were fixed upon the objects of her latest regard, a heavenly smile played upon her features, but her hand grew powerless—her spirit had passed away.

The farmer was parted from a kind and tender wife, whose chief pride had been the possession of such a husband; and Joan was deprived of a fond mother, whose greatest delight had been the beauty and budding virtues of her child. The daughter wept over the remains of her departed parent, and the warm tears fell upon the cold bosom which had been touched by the chill hand of the destroyer. The husband looked upon the perishing and pale corpse, but no moisture hung upon his eyelids, for his was that stern grief

"Which suffers most, nor yet complains."

In a few days, the evanescent remnant of frail mortality was laid within the silent tomb; and the father and the daughter returned to their home, each of them feeling as if bereft of some portion of their own existence.

Another three years rolled on, but not as heretofore; it seemed as if, in losing his partner, Farmer

Phillips had also lost much of that self-restraint and government which had so strongly characterised his previous conduct. He was still ever kind and indulgent to his daughter; but she had lost the careful guardian who would have watched over her frailties, and mildly corrected her imperfections. The female who occupied the place of housekeeper had never been a mother, and was but ill calculated to supply the want of such a mistress to a young female between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. The farmer provided every means of instruction to accomplish his daughter; but not having been accustomed to attend to a minute cultivation of her mind, he was, without being aware of it, sadly neglectful in the nurturing of those principles which bring with them peace to the last. She emerged from the bud of childhood to the opening bloom of woman, in form and features beautiful, even to a proverb. Nature seemed to have thrown around her a halo of personal fascinations, and education had improved an intellect, vivid in its imaginings and keen in its penetrations. But Joan inherited the imperfections of her father, without his strength to resist their encroachments on her happiness. She was mild and affable in her manners; but her mind was powerful in its resolves, and strangely daring when carrying those resolves into effect. There was an affectionate tenderness beaming on her countenance, even when her heart was utterly cold to the object on which she looked; but romantic enthusiasm had filled her with unguarded passions and strong desires, which the situation in which she was placed tended materially to increase. She wandered by herself amidst the ruins of the abbey, and watched the last beams of the sun as they fell with their golden radiance on the grey stones of the venerable pile;—and here it was that she indulged in waking dreams of which she knew not the injurious tendency; and here it was she cherished a viper in her bosom, that waited but for a fitting time to instil the deadly venom in her soul.

Joan had now attained her eighteenth year, and the farmer had received several proposals from the neighbouring yeomen for the hand of his daughter; indeed, so celebrated was her beauty, that not a few of the patrician order had sued for her affection—but she was insensible to all. Amongst the rest, Squire Benson, as he was called, endeavoured to obtain possession of so fair a prize. His estate, the Manor Farm, had descended through several generations of his ancestors down to himself; it was situated about seven miles from the abbey, on the borders of Leicestershire, and the squire was as passionately fond of the chase as his forefathers had been. He was remarkably athletic and strong in his appearance; the ruddy glow of robust health was ever on his countenance, but his looks betrayed a sort of designing cunning that rendered him ridiculous, and his voice was of that squeaking, childish treble, which, when contrasted with his iron frame, was calculated to remind the hearer of Hercules playing upon a penny whistle. What understanding he possessed was wholly uncultivated; for books he seldom troubled himself with, except to tear the leaves out for wadding when he went on a shooting excursion. He was attentive to his farm, but disliked all kinds of business connected with it, and, on more than one occasion, he had been indebted to the good offices of Farmer Phillips in saving him from heavy expenses, which his negligence would have incurred.

An intimacy grew up between the farmer and the squire, and the latter was a frequent visitor at the abbey, especially when Joan became more matured in years and loveliness; for then he fancied himself enamoured with her, though his admiration went but a little way beyond what he would have experienced at the sight of a well-shaped horse, or a fleet hound. In a moment of hilarity, approaching to intemperance, he made proposals for her hand; but the propositions were conveyed to the ears of the fair maiden in a tone

of disgusting familiarity, and she was not sparing in expressions of her utter dislike to him. From that period his visits were less frequent, and he seemed to contemplate some vengeful return for the disdain with which he had been treated.

A beautiful evening had crowned the glories of an early summer day, and the calm, still hour of twilight was shedding its mild influences on the spirit, when Joan wandered forth to taste the sweetness of the cool breeze, that came with refreshing odours to invigorate all nature. The maiden felt the balmy quiet of the hour, and as the deepening shades fell gradually on the surrounding objects, a corresponding serenity reposed within her breast, yet darkened by those romantic visions which she loved to cherish with enthusiastic delight. The spot she had chosen was near the public road, in a kind of natural amphitheatre formed by the rocks, through which a narrow bridle-way led to the higher ground, but which had fallen into disuse, except for the shepherd and its flock. The scenery corresponded with the fervid imagination of the lovely girl. The hawthorn had widely thrown its spreading branches so as to form a natural canopy, and this was festooned by the woodbine and the honeysuckle, whilst the blushing blossoms of the wild rose peeped from their humble coverts, and breathed their fragrance to the breeze.

The summits of the distant hills were losing the last gleams of day, when an indistinct object appeared on the eminence above, was seen for an instant against the light of the sky, and then, descending in the thickening gloom, rapidly approached the spot where Joan, on quitting the bower, had taken her station. At first it showed like a dark mass violently agitated, that came rolling along, heedless of rock or brake, and dashing over every obstacle with resistless impetuosity. Then gradually assuming a more defined formation, her vivid fancy pictured some hideous monster, whose look was terrible, and whose approach

betokened danger. Onwards it came, and though she felt a strong palpitation in her heart, yet her determination was fixed, and she stood undauntedly awaiting the result.

In a few minutes her apprehensions were allayed by the sound of a human voice; and a horseman, who saw her just in time to stop the fleet career of his animal, reined up his foaming steed by her side. The man was arrayed in a huge cloak, that had become loose in his wild haste, and floating behind him, had given to himself and horse the strange appearance they had assumed in the increasing darkness. His stopping at that moment seemed to have been prompted more by humanity than any intention to remain, and he once more prepared to continue his course. He spurred the mettled animal with his armed heel, and the obedient creature sprang forward on his way; but the eye of the rider caught sight of the white flowing drapery of the maiden's dress, and he wheeled the panting horse once more by her side.

"Pardon, fair lady," he uttered, in a strong, clear, and musical voice; "pardon the impetuous haste by which I have exposed you to danger; but life depends upon my speed—every moment is to me as a drop of the blood that is flowing through my veins."

Joan immediately forgot her own alarm, and firmly inquired, "Do you dread danger to yourself; or does the existence of another claim your generous aid?"

"Hark!" responded the man, "my pursuers are on my track; and you," he added with much bitterness, "you, too, will betray me. Yet no," he continued, with more mildness, "you cannot, will not be so base as to have my blood upon your head—mine, who might have been stained with yours. Farewell, lady; farewell!"

He once more attempted to put his horse in

motion, but the bridle was firmly grasped by the maiden, who, in a voice half command, half persuasion, exclaimed, "Stop! I understand you now. You might have dashed me to the earth and trampled on my body. I am safe; but you——." She paused, as if some secret workings were struggling in her breast; then suddenly she approached his side: "This is no time to talk," she continued; "look through the trees to where the glimmering light sheds its pale flickering rays, as if held by the palsied hand of age."

"I see it," said the stranger.

"The life you spared," continued Joan, "I am ready to hazard in your rescue. Haste; take me up behind you, and spare neither whip nor spur: your light must be your guide."

"Noble, heroic girl," returned the animated stranger; shall I expose you to the vengeance of the cavaliers, for harbouring one whose life they seek?"

"Delay not," she impatiently replied. "You are of the persecuted race; my father's house shall give you shelter, where the minions of proud Charles can never enter."

"By Heaven! that voice is harmony itself," rejoined the stranger, in a strain of gallantry; "the instrument must needs be beautiful that yields such dulcet tones."

"You have sported with my agony," impetuously exclaimed the indignant girl. "Impostor! who, to gratify a selfish pride, hast trifled with the kind emotions of the heart,—begone! or woman's vengeance may usurp the better feelings of her nature, and urge her to revenge."

This was spoken in a voice and manner that could not be mistaken, and she turned to move away; but before she had got far, her footsteps were arrested by the deep melancholy of the stranger's utterance, as he said, "I merit this; the child of impulse makes his enemies of friends. Farewell, lady; and should you

hear of my condemnation—for my pursuers are now too close to hope for an escape,—believe me, I will think of your generous purpose, when all else of earth has been forgotten.”

Once more he essayed to depart, as the noise plainly indicated his foes were fast approaching; but Joan, who had listened with deep attention to his words, felt all her romantic fervour operating powerfully on her mind. She suddenly sprang to the stranger's side: “Raise me,” she exclaimed, “haste, haste; raise me to the saddle. That light must be our beacon: on! on!”

The stranger stooped, and with his strong arm he placed her on the horse. It was the work of a moment, and goading the animal with his spurs, they dashed downwards to the point the maiden had directed.

CHAPTER II.

"Thou shalt not leave me, Sylvio."—STERNE'S *Maria*.

AT the first impulse of the moment, Joan had designed to conduct the stranger immediately to the mansion; but on further consideration, she deemed it most prudent to place him where he would be safe from pursuit, till she had informed her father of the circumstance. For this purpose the fair maiden directed her strange companion to the broken crags outside the palisading, and hearing no sound of his enemies in the rear, the man slackened his pace, that he might pass over the rough ground with less inconvenience to his generous guide.

"Forgive, lady," he said, "the subterfuge I used, to try whether you were friend or foe. Believe me, I meant not to sport with those kind and noble feelings you possess; but at a time like this, when a smooth tongue is often the base pander to a treacherous heart, 'tis needful to be wary."

"The offence has been forgotten in the remembrance of your danger," she replied; "revive it not again. But here we must dismount, and you must lead your horse over a rugged path that requires a sure foot."

"Banish fear for us, fair lady," said the stranger, alighting, and assisting the maiden also to alight; "but it grieves me that your lovely frame should be exposed to such fatigue."

"Can you, then, deem me of so selfish a nature," she said, reproachfully, "as to shrink from personal inconvenience when the life of a fellow-creature hangs on the balance? Talk not of fatigue, but

point out in what further service I can render my assistance."

"Generous girl!" he exclaimed, "I am in your hands, and unreservedly resign myself to your direction." He looked cautiously around him. "Yet I cannot but express surprise, that you should thus confide—and in a spot like this—your person and your life to an *unknown* man."

The maiden hesitated for a moment, as she moved to some little distance, and stood at the corner of a turn among the rocks. "You yourself," she said, "have, in that last word, given me sufficient for excuse. It is true you are unknown——"

"Enough, enough," rejoined the stranger; "it is impossible I should be known to *you*."

"It is not enough," replied the animated girl; "you have fostered an ungenerous doubt; you have uttered an unworthy reflection on my prudence. If you merely bear the semblance of humanity without the nobler attributes, I am then companion to a monster, and one who degrades his nature. But even then you cannot fill my breast with fear. I am on my father's grounds, amidst his servants, who would hear my cry and hasten to my rescue; or, if I move but one single step from where I stand, I vanish from your sight."

"We are strangers, lady," said the man with calmness, "and life and death are now within your power. Pardon me, if in such a wild bewildered spot, suspicion crossed my mind. Thus far I am deeply in your debt; yet I would know the name of him upon whose soil I stand: the friends of Charles have ever been my foes."

"He is no enemy to Charles," responded the cautious female; "but his doors are never shut against the oppressed: his name is Phillips."

The stranger gazed intently upon the lovely girl, as if, awakened to some remembrance, he wished to scan her features; but the day had totally departed, and

his anxious look remained ungratified. At this instant a stream of light came full upon them, and the sounds of voices approaching from the building were heard. The man eagerly crossed his arms, and turned his attention alternately to the maiden and the advancing party.

Joan stood firm; but as the blazing faggot sent forth its brightening flame, it showed the countenance of the stranger, and never had she seen one of more commanding aspect. There was a proud defiance in the glistening eye; and the intense holding of the breath, to catch the conversation of the speakers, gave a rigidity to the features, which strongly marked a determination to resist in case of an attack. Suddenly he raised his hand to the saddle, and from a richly mounted holster drew forth an instrument of death. Joan saw the pistol clutched firmly in his grasp, and instantly forgetting her situation, she rushed forward and clung to his arm.

"For the love of Heaven forbear!" she exclaimed; "would you stain your place of sanctuary with the blood of hospitality?"

"I would but stand upon my own defence," returned the man; "the lion is in the toils, but his limbs continue free."

"How madly do you act," urged Joan; "you would indeed make enemies of friends. But I have no right to dictate; you have thrown discredit on my motives, and I must leave you to your own capricious course, even at the moment when security is sure."

"Lady," mournfully answered the stranger, "I am an outcast,—one who is proscribed and valued at a price. Every wily stratagem has been used to catch me in their snares; even women, whose hearts should have shuddered at base and bloody fraud, have sold themselves as agents to work out my destruction. They hunt me down, and would change my disposition to the ferocious fierceness of the wolf; but

freedom, freedom is my theme, and for liberty I stand or die."

Joan felt her romantic enthusiasm revive; she seemed as if in the presence of some superior being, who with the energies of enchantment had touched her with his magic sceptre, and her mind devotedly bent to his control. The individual before her was in her power, and power is the besetting sin of woman's heart; yet here she felt its influences were vain, for a mightier spell descended upon her spirit. The cause in which her father had fought, though known only by hearsay, had become infinitely dear to her; and now she beheld a gallant victim, ready to sacrifice his existence in support of those principles which kept tyranny in awe.

"Again I repeat to you," said Joan, "that those you see are friends; but at this juncture, even from them I would wish to keep you secret. Turn this corner, and you are safe from every eye."

She moved onwards round the point of the rock; the stranger instinctively followed, and in a few seconds found himself involved in utter darkness.

"You have faithfully fulfilled your promise, lady," said the man. "No mortal eye can penetrate this blackened gloom; but those who would seek me here, will not come without due preparation. The flaming brand would soon point out the object of their hate, their balls would pierce my body, and you, my guide, my protectress, might share my untimely fate."

"If there were indeed enemies amongst the party that we saw," replied Joan, "we must penetrate further. But to what will you impute my motives *then*? If the hand of weak woman is extended to lead you through these dreary passages—beyond the reach of all pursuit, you will perhaps ascribe it to any cause but the true one."

"It is useless to contend with destiny," observed the stranger; "and I will acknowledge, lady, I am faint. Some few miles hence, when first discovered

by my foes, their shots flew thick about me, and one or two have ploughed their furrows in my frame, so that——”

“You are wounded and bleeding, then,” said Joan, taking his right hand, and gently forcing him along. “A few minutes, and my father shall afford you succour. Stretch your left arm to nearly its full extent, and let your fingers touch the rocky wall as you proceed.”

“But my horse,” exclaimed the man; “he refuses to advance. Are there no breaks, no falls, to make him trip?”

“I had forgotten,” replied Joan; “he must remain within the cavern for a short space.”

“Could I secure his bridle, lady,” rejoined the other, “he would stand peaceable and still; otherwise I fear he would dash himself to pieces on this rough-hewn floor.”

“I know not where to place the bridle,” answered Joan.

“Give it to me,” exclaimed a harsh and unexpected voice, that made the maiden start. “I will hold him till you send——”

“Who speaks?” demanded Joan. “I thought this spot had never been frequented.”

“Nor is it often visited,” answered the voice, “except by one whom man has singled from his fellows as the object of distrust and ridicule, one who eats the bread of poverty and penury,—the branded Jefferies.”

“Then we are safe,” continued the maiden. “Come, stranger, resign the animal to him. He has suffered too much persecution to betray another to his hapless lot.”

“Right, Miss Phillips,” answered the voice; “but were there no other motive, gratitude to you would seal my lips for ever.”

The arrangement was soon made; for Jefferies, directed by their voices, ascertained the spot on which

they stood, and Joan conducted the stranger to the interior of the vaults; where, leaving him alone, she retraced her steps, spoke to Jefferies as she passed, and in a few minutes joined the party which had been seeking her. Without delaying an instant, she hastened to the apartment of her father, briefly related what had taken place, and the humane farmer, having provided himself with proper requisites, went out by a private way to administer to the necessities of the individual who had been so strangely thrown upon his protection.

The horse was put into one of the underground vaults, and Jefferies (a poor mendicant, who in early life had been a soldier under Cromwell, but having been taken by the Royalist and branded, had afterwards shrunk from the society of man) was directed to go secretly to the abbey, and convey materials from thence to form the stranger's couch of rest. Joan had prepared for his coming; and the mendicant returned to the cavern with a mattress and warm coverings, which the fair girl and the kind housekeeper readily supplied. Nor was Mrs. Grace surprised, when the young lady had told her just so much of the occurrence as was necessary to awake her sympathy, for Farmer Phillips was ever engaged in acts of mercy to his oppressed and suffering countrymen.

Joan retired to her apartment. Sensations such as she had never before experienced came with thrilling vigour in her bosom, and a storm of conflicting feelings raged with violence in her heart. Yet there was a glow of pleasure over all; and though the wild and apparently capricious manners of the stranger had left a bewildering influence upon her memory, his countenance was indelibly stamped upon her mind, never—never to be effaced.

The farmer found his uninvited guest labouring under great weakness from loss of blood. Proper applications were made, and though the place he was in displayed the usual barbarism of a common dun-

geon, yet, to a man who had been used to the tented field, and who now sought a shelter from persecution and from death, it was a palace of luxury, a refuge from destruction.

The stranger at first gave indications of uneasiness and distrust; but the kindness of the farmer soon dispelled apprehensions, and he was at once free and communicative: indeed, the sudden transition from open confidence to marked suspicion, seemed to proceed more from the continued persecutions he said he had suffered, than from want of any frankness in his disposition. The domestic animal, when hunted and abused, becomes shy and wild, though harmless and confiding when treated with kindness.

Charles Davenport (for such the stranger gave his name) was attended through the night by the mendicant, and a recognition took place between them. The father of the former had been intimately connected with the regicides; he commanded a party of the guard near the scaffold at the execution of Charles, and Jefferies served as a private under him. They had also fought on the same side; but the officer, being taken prisoner, was put to a horrid death by his captors. At the Restoration his estates were confiscated, and the son cast destitute upon the world. Jefferies, who had been sworn to as present at the execution, was branded in the forehead, and the disgrace, like the mark upon the brow of Cain, had made him become a wanderer to and fro in the land. He had a wife, and he had children; and though he supported them by the contributions he gleaned from the charitable, he would not let them look upon that stamp of infamy which had seared his very soul. Barely allowing himself sufficient to keep the spirit within its frail tenement, all the food and money he could procure were left at a certain spot that his family well knew; and sometimes, in the dark and silent hour of night, he would watch the persons who came to fetch them away; and as his offspring, or

his once tenderly-beloved and still esteemed partner, passed in the dim gloom before him, the scalding drops of anguish were wrung from his eyelids, and another oath of implacable hatred to his oppressors was registered in his breast. Indeed, if report spoke true, he had, in more than one instance, wreaked his vengeance on the straggling troopers of the Crown; but as there was no evidence of the fact, he was suffered to remain at large.

Several days passed away, and to the astonishment of Joan and her father, no inquiries had been made at the abbey. A party of dragoons had passed along the road on the night of the incident, seemingly in hot pursuit; but after some hours, they had quietly returned towards Northampton. Davenport was kept a few days longer in concealment, to prevent surprise; and then, agreeably to a plan that had been devised, at the dusk of the evening he rode round to the entrance of the avenue, and made his appearance at the house as a distant relative. Nor was the smallest suspicion excited amongst the domestics, for they had been for some time expecting a person to come amongst them, to assist the farmer in his declining years.

The fascinating Joan had not seen the handsome stranger since the moment when she caught a glimpse of his features by the blaze of the pine-brand on that well-remembered night, and she waited with much agitation the period when she should again behold him. Her dress was exquisitely neat, yet arrayed with a graceful ease, so as not to have the semblance of affected study; and never was there seen a form more perfect, or a face more lovely.

Joan sat in the room generally occupied by her father, when Davenport was introduced. She had seen many fine athletic men, but none in her opinion to equal the bold and manly figure that stood before her, pouring forth, in a clear musical voice, those expressions of gratitude which fall sweetly upon the

ear of a benefactor. But here she saw a being whose existence, in all probability, she had preserved; and, without being aware of it, she had already begun to love the life which, by her timely succour, had been saved. It was a natural feeling for a young female breast; for what girl of eighteen ever snatched a creature (even of the brute creation) from destruction, without cherishing a desire to possess the rescued one, and to make it all her own? But how much more powerful an interest was excited in the bosom of the beautiful girl as she looked upon the handsome stranger; and a thrill of pleasure played about her heart as she mentally uttered, "He owes me a life."

Davenport had thrown aside his cloak, and appeared in a light becoming dress, that was set off to great advantage by his well-formed limbs. A Spanish hat, with a graceful plume was in his hand; and his black curly hair hung clustering unconfined about his forehead. There was a frankness in his countenance and a freedom in his manner, that set cold formality at defiance; but his eyes occasionally betrayed a restless impetuosity, a flashing fierceness, that offered a striking contrast to his seemingly tranquil features.

Joan, though somewhat embarrassed, arose from her seat, and advancing, with a tear trembling on her long silken eyelash, she offered him her hand. The stranger received it with all the grace and ease of polished society, raised it to his lips, and the fair girl felt the kiss of fervid gratitude impressed not only upon her hand, but upon her heart. Oh, it was one of those sweetest, holiest draughts of ecstasy, which shed a delicious balm upon the spirit, but only once within the compass of a whole existence.

The farmer gazed upon the pair with mingling sensations of pleasure and of pride; they seemed formed by nature for each other, and he determined, if there were no obstacles in the way, Charles should thenceforth find a welcome and a home.

The mendicant had departed, well rewarded for his attention, and he hastened to deposit his treasure at the appointed spot. His heart was more than usually light, as he calculated upon the increased comforts his family would be able to procure; and the certainty of having a friend on whose aid, in emergency, he could rely, lessened the anxiety which had hitherto preyed upon his mind.

Mrs. Grace (who alone was let into the secret) arrayed her face in its best smiles; for she, good-hearted soul, felt honoured by the trust reposed in her, and made every preparation for the comfort and accommodation of her master's guest. Dressings were prepared by her own hands for the healing of his wounds, and her stock of medicines underwent a rigid scrutiny, to find a pleasant and composing draught. But Charles required no soporifics to lull him to repose; the comfortable apartment he was ushered into, the soft bed on which he stretched his limbs, and a confidence of safety, soon sealed his eyes in tranquil slumbers.

The pillow of Joan that night afforded but little rest; a new era seemed opening upon her. Sentiments to which she had hitherto been a stranger now fluttered in her bosom. She knew not the danger of fostering them so near her heart; but she felt a rapturous delight in the indulgence, and her ardent fancy glowed with bright and happy prospects.

In the course of a day or two, the farmer guardedly inquired his visitor's future intentions, and delicately hinted his own wish that he would remain at the abbey. Charles related to the farmer some of the events of his juvenile days, acknowledged he was an orphan, and gave such an account as clearly pointed out that the spirit of persecution had been cruelly bitter against him.

"But here you may remain unheeded," said the farmer, "and have no fear of detection."

"My enemies are as watchful as they are merciless,"

returned Davenport, "and I would not wish that you should suffer through my misfortunes."

"I leave it to yourself," replied the farmer; "but I give you counsel as I would to my own son. The time that has passed since you first sheltered here, and no inquiry made, induces me to believe you might remain unknown, and consequently no mischief could happen either to me or mine. It is true, that at times my spirit burns to avenge the wrongs of my groaning country; but what could this single hand perform against a host? Could the crimes of the rulers be visited upon themselves alone, I should think life but a small sacrifice to attain so desirable a consummation. But oh, how many deserted hearths, how many desolate widows and unprotected orphans does civil war produce! Yet grant me, Heaven, sufficient strength to strike the proud oppressors down, and I would willingly, like Samson in the house of Dagon, die with my enemies."

"I honour your sentiments, sir," said Davenport; "they accord with my own. But Samson, whilst blessed with the glorious light, lost no opportunity to slay his foes; then, why should I cease to wage perpetual war with those who will not permit me to live in peace."

"Because you are compelled to slay the innocent with the guilty," rejoined the farmer. "The dead rest in quiet, but 'tis the fatherless who suffer."

"Considerations of that nature did not operate with those who cast *me* an orphan on the world," returned Davenport with agitation.

"No," exclaimed the farmer; "when we engage a foreign enemy, a sentiment of duty to our country nerves each arm; but when friend and kindred meet in deadly fray, there is a rankling animosity in the heart that bursts all bonds,—it is the curse of civil warfare."

"I should be lost to every principle of gratitude," replied the other, "if I did not justly appreciate your

kindness. My obligations are indeed many; and this last and greatest you would seek to confer demands my warmest thanks. Yet there are circumstances which render deliberation necessary, and you, my excellent friend, will pardon me if I require a few hours to consider of your proposal."

"Take what time you please," conceded the farmer. "I meant not to hasten you in your resolves; but I should keenly regret your being again exposed to cruelty and, perhaps, an ignominious death."

They parted, and the farmer, a little chagrined at what he deemed the young man's obstinacy, could not forbear relating the subject of conversation to his daughter, who was far from being an unbiassed listener to the narrative. But she kept the secret to herself, and with deceptive composure affected an indifference which she did not feel. Her father went to superintend the duties of his farm, satisfied that the stranger had not made an undue impression on his child; whilst Joan, with feelings she could not account for, wandered into the shrubbery which skirted the lawn, and seating herself in a small retired arbour, alternately gave way to the free indulgence of her hopes and fears.

Whilst thus engaged in thinking of the handsome stranger, the many perils he had encountered, and the numerous ills he might yet suffer if once more thrown into the world's wild vortex, a deep and heartfelt sigh escaped her. In an instant it seemed as if echo was responding, for a heavier sigh was heard, and raising her head, she saw Charles Davenport stand at the entrance of her solitary retreat.

"I hope Miss Phillips will not think me an unwelcome intruder," he said; "but the fineness of the day and the beauty of the scenery have enticed me forth, to taste the sweet enjoyments which nature has so bountifully provided."

"Yet there are persons," returned the maiden,

"who would prefer the busy scenes of life, or the deadly career of warfare, to the quiet and serenity of such a spot as this."

"All dispositions are not alike," he rejoined. "The sailor loves his world of waters, though it is frequently defaced with storms; the soldier glows with delight to see the gallant squadrons in their military array, though but the prelude to a spectacle of blood and slaughter; whilst the plodding citizen toils on with unceasing industry to accumulate the wealth another will enjoy, and perhaps waste in profusion and extravagance."

"And is it really possible for the human heart to take delight in bloodshed?" inquired Joan.

"There is an ambitious thirst for conquest," replied Davenport, "that stifles the best feelings of humanity. The brave soldier who fights for his country, or the patriot who watches for its safety, are alike honourable members of society."

"I am almost a stranger to the world," said Joan, "and therefore unacquainted with its manners; yet to me it seems surprising that men should give the preference to constant danger, instead of the quiet and the safety of a spot — like this, for instance."

"There are times, Miss Phillips," he rejoined, "when an exposure to all the perils which beset existence becomes a duty, and from which it would be cowardice to shrink. Safety is certainly most precious and desirable, and in a rural spot like this, I — But, 'tis useless to cherish such a wish; my course is dark, and I must brave it as I ought."

Joan felt deeply agitated; there was a touching melancholy in the voice of her companion, that awakened all her sensitiveness of mind. She would have urged him to remain, but maiden delicacy restrained her from expressing what her heart was readily dictating, and she remained silent.

"Believe me, Miss Phillips," he added, after a short

pause; "believe me, wherever my fate shall lead me, the remembrance of the generous protection I have met with here shall never be erased while life endures, and when the solitary wanderer, hunted by persecution, shall probably have no other couch but the cold earth, no other covering but the canopy of heaven, will you cherish one thought, one kind recollection, and pity his hapless lot?"

A tremulous emotion shook his voice to childish weakness. Joan spread her hands before her face, and a warm gush of tears relieved her surcharged breast, as she convulsively sobbed,—“Why—why leave us?”

“Is there not a dire necessity?” he replied. “You cannot know the struggling conflict in my soul;—yet, in every vicissitude, it will be dear to memory that Miss Phillips took an interest in my welfare.”

“I share it in common with my father,” she answered; “but now I am heartless and dispirited from indisposition, and my nerves are overpowered. Still, I will not deny the pride I feel at having been instrumental to your succour, nor will I attempt to conceal the grief and anxiety which your departure will create—although, perhaps, you will again do injustice to my motives.”

“That I should ever have given you cause for reproach,” replied Davenport, “is to me a source of sorrow; yet, lady, it was my circumstances, and not my will. Your kind solicitude is as a soothing balsam to my troubled mind, and would induce me to remain, that I might occasionally enjoy its tranquillizing influences. But no—no; I dare not indulge in such a cheering prospect. The poor outcast—the child of adversity, must still be buffeted by the waves of oppression. Yet, could I be certain that my stay would not involve my benefactors in my danger. Alas, 'tis hopeless! 'tis hopeless!”

As he concluded, he hastily quitted the place where he had been standing, and almost rushed into the

thick plantation, as if to hide his keen distress. Joan retained her seat, unable to rise, through agitation, and nearly overpowered by the hysterical tendency of her feelings. She had experienced the alternations of ardent expectation and bitter disappointment whilst Davenport was addressing her, and torturing doubt still held its domination over her bosom. She was the indulged child of a fond father, who denied her nothing; and, indeed, her request to Davenport was the only one she could ever remember as having been rejected, and it greatly increased the vexatious poignancy of her regret.

Another day or two passed over, and Joan had importuned her father in such touching accents, and yet with such maidenly reserve, that the anxious parent made the most handsome proposals to the young man; who, after mature consideration, and not without a hint to Joan that it was partly in submission to her request, complied. Davenport was accordingly installed in his office, as assistant to the farmer, and the maiden's joy, though concealed, was exquisitely great.

The domestics were wholly unacquainted with the occurrences that had taken place, and received their new master with evident symptoms of satisfaction, which his courteous behaviour soon improved; indeed, before many weeks had terminated, his constant attention to their wants, and the arduous assistance he afforded them in their labours, rendered him an object of esteem to all the peasantry around.

Towards Miss Phillips his manners were rather constrained than otherwise, and he always addressed her in the most respectful terms. Yet he watched her every look, and, without seeming to be aware of it, anticipated her wishes. He was also an able auxiliary in her studies; and whilst imparting instruction, managed his plans so skilfully, as to appear more like the pupil than the teacher. In casual conversations he talked to her of foreign parts, of deeds

of chivalry and renown; told her tales of love and woe, and alternately beguiled her of smiles and tears. In the evening walk he was her companion, but he never spoke of themselves; and, though attentive to the utmost extreme, there was also a distant respect in his attentions which was far more gratifying to Joan, and infinitely better calculated to secure her unbounded affection, than all the protestations of fervent attachment. She did not hear the pledge of love, she felt it in the inmost recesses of her soul:—it was blended with her very life.

CHAPTER III.

"Her heart awakes
To love; and soul and sense then follow quick,
To willing and blind bondage."—*The Broken Heart.*

ABOUT the time of the events already recorded, a noted highwayman, of the name of Bracey, spread terror through the midland districts, by the number of robberies he had committed, and the great value of the plunder he had obtained. Parties had been sent in pursuit of him, but he contrived to elude them all; and so daring were his achievements, that superstition had invented many fabulous tales of his being more than mortal. He had never been known to have received a wound, and some asserted that they had seen the bullets strike his breast and rebound back again, to the destruction of those who aimed at him. Others had witnessed the thrusting a naked sword through his body without doing him the slightest injury; whilst all agreed that he would attack an armed man, or even two, and when engaged, his countenance was bleached with the cadaverous hue of death, and not unfrequently sulphureous flames would issue from his nostrils. The horse he rode was supposed to possess, in an eminent degree, the qualities of his master, and both had at times disappeared so suddenly, that the rider was considered by the peasantry to be either some potent magician, or an agent of the Evil One, if not actually the very demon himself.

For several months Bracey had not been heard of, and confidence began to be restored. Travellers once more journeyed with their gold about them, and hopes were entertained that the demon-robber would visit

them no more; when, to the consternation of all, a king's officer was found murdered and plundered within a few miles of the abbey grounds. Farmer Phillips and Charles Davenport were the most active in their endeavours to ascertain who had been guilty of this desperate act; but the whole transaction was involved in such inexplicable mystery, that notwithstanding large rewards were offered and every exertion used to discover the murderer, all traces beyond the finding of the corpse were utterly lost. At first it was hoped that the deed had been perpetrated by some casual plunderer; but subsequent robberies too plainly evinced that Bracey was again issuing from retirement.

The daring of this desperate man had often been the subject of conversation at the abbey; and Joan, in her romantic enthusiasm, had more than once indulged a wish to see a being who was so reckless of danger and fearless of death. This wish was nurtured in concealment, but it grew stronger and stronger as the undaunted acts of the highwayman became more and more discussed. Jefferies had once or twice visited them since his attendance upon Davenport, and she had questioned him on the subject of the intrepid robber. His answers, whilst they teemed with mystery, served to increase her curiosity; and the constant association with Charles having removed her diffidence, she ultimately expressed herself to him with unreserved freedom. He would sometimes smile at the ardency of her language, at other times he would treat it with well-pointed humour; but generally his answers were of that nature which, whilst they appeared to condemn, had the effect of producing a more powerful excitement, until Edward Bracey became the theme of her thoughts and the phantom of her midnight visions.

The latter days of autumn had arrived, and the trees began to assume that mournful appearance

which indicates the approach of winter. It was the dissolution of a beautiful summer, and nature seemed to struggle against the destroyer, as if desirous of retaining some portion of her loveliness to the very last hour. The foliage was falling into "the sear and yellow leaf," the herbage had assumed a deeper shade, and the meadows had lost that bright verdure which is so delightfully refreshing to the eye. Yet there was a beauty in the scenery around the abbey which only this season of the year could impart, for it seemed to be more especially identified with the abbey itself.

The youthful Joan, with her constant associate Davenport, were attracted to the rising ground, to watch the last rays of the setting sun. They stood gazing on the descending luminary, and as the glorious object disappeared from the verge of the horizon, the lovely girl felt as if parting from one kind friend, and pressed closer to the side of her companion, that she might be assured there was still another left.

"There is an indefinable sensation," said Joan, "a sort of secret fascination in such an hour as this;—it enchains the sense and captivates the heart. How still is everything around! The tumult of the mind is hushed to repose upon the calm of solitude."

"Yet, fair lady," returned Davenport, "I have witnessed such an hour upon the eve of battle, when the unconscious victims of the morrow were deeply sleeping. I have looked at the last rays of the setting sun, as what I might never see again. I have seen the clear blue heavens, tinged with a golden radiance, do honour to the departing orb, and all nature has been still and passionless."

"How grand must such a sight appear," said Joan.

"Ay, grand indeed," continued Charles; "the white tents glowing with the evening's brightness, the banners flashing in the breeze, whilst many an

anxious thought of home and all its loves and joys, has mingled with anticipations of the approaching conflict."

"And can the heart at such a time as that—when pity shuns the walks of carnage—can the heart have sentiments of tenderness?" inquired Joan.

"Yes, Miss Phillips," replied Davenport; "for mankind seldom value their enjoyments more highly than when there is a probability of losing them. The spot of early delights becomes a thousand times more dear; and that home of the heart, in some fond, some kindred bosom, is rendered inestimably precious when dark apprehensions spread a heavy gloom upon the future."

"But then there are the hopes of conquest," said Joan.

"And what is the hour of conquest?" exclaimed Charles. "I have seen the deepening shadows fall on the bloody field, where the polished helm and the glittering sword have mocked the mangled corpes that owned them. I have heard the deathgroan and the wild shriek of agony come mingling with the trumpet's peal and the loud shout of victory. Yet the sun has gone down in glory; the skies have been glowing and serene; the bosom of nature has been mantled with tranquillity, whilst death and slaughter triumphed."

The beautiful maiden shuddered at the scene her companion had so vividly depicted; but looking on the quiet spectacle before them, she said, "Yet, Charles, you must confess the powers of nature, though man may deface its beauties. How does the spirit of romance steal upon us, when looking at yon remnant of the olden time!"—pointing to the abbey. "The grey tower is mouldering to decay; but fancy revives the past, when in its pristine strength it formed a bold defence against intruders."

"And see," said Charles, apparently catching her enthusiasm, "how beautifully the red glare of the

evening tips the distant hills, whose outlines are strongly marked against the brightness of the sky, whilst the dark woods below frown in their sullenness. What a spot would that be for Robin Hood and his merry men; and hark!" he continued, as the lowing of cattle came faintly on the ear, "there is the horn of the robber-band summoning them to their nightly plunder——"

"With Bracey for their leader," added Joan, interrupting him. "I know not how it is, Charles, but there is a secret something stirring in my breast, exciting the most powerful desire to see that noted man. The tales which are told of him possess no terrors for me; nay, more, I have the most positive information that he is humane and generous to the poor, lavishing amongst them the wealth he plunders from the rich."

"He merits no praise for that," replied Charles; "it is policy on both sides, for no doubt the poor often aid in his escape, that they may profit by his robberies."

"Yet, Charles," inquired the maiden, "why should he expose himself at all?"

"Nay," replied Charles, "that is for his own tongue to tell. Perhaps he has been injured by the world, and seeks revenge. Perhaps it is to gain a dreaded name; or, probably, hunted from society, he has no other source from which to support life."

"It is strange," said Joan; "I feel a secret link within my breast, which binds me to this outlawed man. I see him in my midnight dreams with a countenance as frank as thine, Charles; and Jefferies tells me——"

"The mendicant has practised on your mind, I fear," exclaimed Davenport, interrupting her rather impatiently. "What can he know of such a man as Bracey? But pardon me, Miss Phillips, if zeal for the welfare of my preserver has rendered me too hasty, or too harsh."

Joan had keenly felt the impetuosity of her companion's manner, and the sharp sarcasm which his words at first conveyed; but the latter part of his expressions again soothed her. "I feel grateful for your solicitude," said she, "and that shall excuse your harshness. But believe me, Charles, the time will come when I shall behold this outlaw. I know it must: a presentiment is constantly on my mind, nor will I shrink from the interview."

Charles gently took her arm, and they continued their walk till the twilight hour saw them standing on that very spot where they had first met. They seemed to have had no settled purpose in coming hither; chance alone appeared to have guided them to the place; but busy recollection rushed upon their minds, and they looked with a thrilling pleasure at each other, as a mutual feeling of strong, though unacknowledged attachment predominated in the breast of both.

Davenport took the hand of the lovely girl, and pressed it to his lips. "And here it was," he said, "that, heaven-directed, you, like a guardian angel, interposed the shield of safety in the hour of peril. A life humbly devoted to your service would be but a poor recompense for such a generous deed."

The maiden hesitated for a moment, and then uttered,—

"Was it indeed heaven-directed? Yes, I will think so, and seek no other recompense than the gratifying certainty of having saved you."

"You would then reject the high-wrought gratitude which has ripened into fixed devotion?" said Davenport dejectedly.

"No," replied the animated girl, as they entered her favourite bower, and seated themselves upon the mossy bank from which the wild-thyme yielded forth its fragrance—"no, Charles, I am above disguise, and will not mistake your meaning. There is my hand; may yours be ever firm to mine! You have my heart

already; cherish it as you would the deposit of a sacred trust."

Davenport took the hand of the blushing maiden, and a joyous sensation of rich delight swelled in his breast when he heard her frank avowal. He pressed her soft and taper fingers between his own, raised the beautiful fair hand to his lips; but without imprinting the expected kiss, he let it fall again, and turned his head away.

Dark indignation loured on the maiden's brow as she started from her seat. "You reject my proffered hand," she impetuously exclaimed, "because it is cheaply won. You despise my conquered heart, because it soars above the weakness of my sex; but sooner shall this hand be severed from my body,—sooner shall this heart be torn bleeding from my breast than——"

"In mercy stay!" implored Charles, and, falling on his knees, he seized the hand he had relinquished reclined his head upon it, and Joan felt it moistened by warm tears, whilst the strong frame of her lover trembled with agitation.

"How!—what is this?" said Joan, with a voice subdued by tenderness. "Why this emotion? You have deceived a heart that loved you, and now we must part—ay, part for ever."

"Will you not hear my vindication?" asked Charles. "Will you condemn, without knowing why or wherefore?"

"It is enough that I have been betrayed into this humiliating scene," replied Joan; "but baseness, such as yours, deserves punishment as well as condemnation. I have thought you candid and sincere; and if only a small particle of candour or sincerity remain, your punishment will not be slight. Sir, I must and will leave you."

She endeavoured to extricate her hand; but he still retained it, until every passion of her mind was roused; when, suddenly flinging it from him, he

started on his feet, and in a voice of scorn exclaimed, "It is well for you, Miss Phillips, to charge me with deception,—you, whose very dreams are of an outlawed robber—you, who long to see this desperate man, as babes desire nourishment,—you, who make your very soul an altar to worship his cherished image! You would have Charles Davenport to dangle by your side, the humble creature of your lighter hours and sportive dalliance. Yes, he forsooth must take your hand as readily as he did your father's plough; he must toil to win your smiles, whilst every furrow of your heart would yield its fruit for Bracey."

The astonished maiden had retreated several steps, and she felt overawed by his manner, though wholly unalarmed at his vehemence. She had treasured an ardent sentiment of undying affection, and with it had also cherished a hope that her love would not be unrequited. A sudden blight seemed to have withered all her expectations; the hope to which she had clung was wasting away, and she experienced that horrible sickness of heart which prefers straggling and death, rather than life. At the sound of Davenport's voice she stopped; and when he had ceased, she calmly said,—

"Sir, it is a debt of justice which I pay myself when I affirm how deeply you have wronged me. The daughter of Major Phillips is above the degradation you would impute to her. The gallant daring of the outlaw may have gained him a respect in the breast of one who loves to hear of the actions of the brave; and, in a noble cause, were I the companion of his danger, he should find a heart would glory in his manly heroism. But tainted as he is with crime, and stained with the blood of unoffending innocence — no, sir, my soul revolts at such a union."

She turned away, and was leaving the spot, when Davenport once more addressed her. "Hear me,

Miss Phillips," he exclaimed, "only one word before we finally separate. There is not a being upon earth besides yourself who holds one particle of my affections."

Joan stopped, whilst every pulse throbbed with conflicting feelings, and he went on, "I would swear, but oaths are not more binding than my word; for the man whose affirmation is not to be relied upon would not scruple to break the oath he took. Hear me, Miss Phillips," he continued, with mournful depression of voice; "every feeling, every fibre of my heart is linked with fervent love to you alone. It is true, the time is at hand when we part for ever; yet, believe me, I will nourish no other love; you are the first, and shall be the last and only one. Yes, even my dying thoughts—and the event may not be far distant—shall dwell with delight on those endearing remembrances which I shall not blush to carry into the presence of my Maker."

Joan became nearly overpowered; a tumultuous reaction had taken place in her whole system; her fond regard now amounted to fervid worship, and she was about to speak, but he restrained her.

"Nay, hear me to the end," he continued. "Am I not an outcast, whom oppression has hunted down? I have seen the home of my boyhood a smoking ruin; I have seen the grey hairs of my father dishonoured and stained with his own gore; I have seen my kindred butchered like cattle in a slaughter-house; the hand of every man was raised against me, and how could I ask your delicacy to share my danger, or revenge my death? No, no; it is impossible."

He threw himself upon the bank, and heavy groans burst from his troubled breast. Joan rushed towards him; all her strong, enthusiastic passion was excited. He was still her own. She grasped his powerless hand, pressed it to her throbbing bosom, and exclaimed, "Say but you love me, and I will do both."

"Love you, Joan?" he falteringly replied;
"Heaven knows how dearly—tenderly."

"It is enough," she firmly answered, and we will live and die together."

Charles caught her to his heart; he pressed a burning kiss upon her lips; the rush of passion, the darkling hour—all conspired, and in one long, one ardent embrace, that bond of union was sealed which ought to be dissolved only by death. No priest pronounced the nuptial benediction; no husband gazed with rapture on his blushing bride; but Joan—the beautiful and accomplished Joan—fell from the height of virtue to the debasement of vice and ruin.

CHAPTER IV

“Stand and deliver.”

FARMER Phillips had not been insensible to the devotedness of Davenport to his daughter, nor was he blind to the partiality which Joan at all times manifested for the young man; but the respectful demeanour of Charles, and his strong reliance on the integrity of his daughter, made him neglectful in placing those barriers round her mind, which might have preserved her from destruction. Noble in his own sentiments, and strictly honourable in all his actions, he could not believe that the man whose life he had protected, who had eaten of his bread and drunk of his cup, could meditate so base, so villanous a return as the seduction of his child.

But Joan, who had lost her mother at an age when a mother's counsel is most required, was deprived of that warning voice and that maternal guidance, which would have guarded her from ruin, and led her in the paths of innocence. Joan had been well educated; her accomplishments were equal to her personal beauty; but she had no female monitor to regulate her conduct, and to restrain her passions; she had no mother to correct her errors, and kindly to admonish her of the approach of danger. The bitter feeling that fell with oppressive weight upon her mind, when she could no longer consider herself a being of purity and chastity, was deep and terrible; for though her fault was unknown to the world, yet she herself was horribly sensible of it, and the degradation to infamy was deeply stamped upon her heart. She uttered no reproaches against the man who had betrayed her, for she knew not of the subtle net that had been cruelly

meshed around her, and her love for the seducer was too ardent, too sincere, to condemn any one but herself.

For some time after that fatal evening she avoided Davenport (whose outward respect remained unaltered), except on those occasions when it was necessary to meet him so as not to raise suspicion. But her unconquerable attachment and his unceasing devotion reconciled her in some measure to herself, and their interviews became more and more frequent.

Vice is progressive in its career; the female who falls a prey to the snare of some hardened villain is soon rendered callous to her situation, and as she sinks deeper and deeper in guilt, becomes infinitely more depraved than wretches of the hardier sex. The sense of delicacy which once operated on the mind of Joan was gradually subdued; one object, and only one, had undivided possession of every principle of her heart, and to him she had yielded up her virtue. Yet at times an overwhelming sense of dishonour called the burning blush of shame upon her cheeks, and her pillow was often watered by the tears of repentance.

The worthy farmer had become stricken with age; he ardently wished to see his daughter happy, and observing the mutual attachment between her and Davenport, he would have raised no objection to their union—indeed, it would rather have diminished his anxiety to know he should leave his child so well protected by a husband, and so amply provided for by the property he himself should bequeath. Joan, too, felt an earnest wish for their bond to be made sacred; but she relied upon the honour of the man who had decoyed her to her ruin. The farmer was blameless, for he knew not of his daughter's dishonour, and love had blinded the conquered girl to all her lover's frailties and imperfections.

Winter had set in with its usual rigours, and the farmer and his daughter were seated at the evening

fire, whilst Charles was absent in a remote part of the grounds seeking some cattle that had strayed.

"He is a good youth" said the farmer, "and I make no doubt would manage matters well, if it should please Heaven to call me hence."

"I hope, my dear father," replied Joan, "such an event is far distant, and that you will long live to cultivate the farm."

"For your sake," rejoined the farmer, "I could wish so too; but the infirmities of age are coming fast upon me, my sight grows dim, my strength decays to feebleness, and these are warnings not to be despised. Indeed, since your dear mother left me, I have been gradually following to the same resting-place."

"I fear something has oppressed your spirits, my father," said Joan; "tell me what there is I can do to cheer you."

The farmer wiped a silent monitor from his eye as he uttered, "Just so would your dear mother have addressed me. She was, indeed, all excellence; and you, my child—my only child, will tread in the same paths."

Joan averted her face and screened it with her hands, whilst a sob of anguish burst from her inmost soul. The name of her departed mother had ever operated most powerfully on her mind; now she knew she could never more resemble her maternal parent, and she painfully grieved for the deception she was practising towards an indulgent father. But the farmer mistook the cause of her agitation, and attributed it to early recollections of her deceased mother.

"Grieve not, my child," he said; "the scenes of time must pass away, for this is but a probationary state; and when eternity opens on our view, I trust we shall meet together in those blissful realms of immortality, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

"Never, never!" shrieked Joan. "Oh, my father! death will disunite us through the boundless round of an eternity. You will meet my mother in the mansions of the blessed, whilst I——"

Here further exclamation, which might have betrayed her secret, was prevented by a loud knocking at the outer door, and a shrill voice vociferating for help. The doors were thrown open, and in a few minutes Squire Benson entered the apartment. He was covered with the dust of a frost-bound road, and his head displayed a wound, which, though slight in itself, had nevertheless bled very profusely, and the crimson stream hung in icicles on his hair, like the red coral rent from the rock. The sudden interruption, and the rather appalling spectacle which Benson presented, changed the current of thought in which her father's conversation had involved Miss Phillips; and though the squire was hateful to her, she prepared to perform all those little courtesies which were within the peculiar province of female kindness; whilst Mrs. Grace, the housekeeper, speedily got ready her stock of washes, lint, and bandages, which the case might require.

"How do ye do, farmer?" said the young man; "and you, Miss Phillips, your servant. But, by the lord Harry! if ever I uncarth that varmint agen, he had better be by the side of General Monck's grandmother—that's all."

"You seem to have had rough usage, sir," said Farmer Phillips, assisting the squire to remove his cloak; "but I hope you are not seriously injured."

"Rough usage?" rejoined the other. "You may say that; but I have one satisfaction,—it was no mortal man. No, no; none but the devil himself could have resisted this sound argument,"—pulling out a pistol from his pocket;—"for you may see, farmer, it can wind up a dispute with as pretty a round full stop as ever was found in the grammar-book."

"We will not stop to inquire particulars now," said the farmer; "but let us minister to your wants. I beg that you will use your accustomed freedom, and consider yourself at home."

"Thank ye, farmer, thank ye," returned the squire: "I will quarter myself upon you for this night, if you will admit me; for, in truth, I am sore bruised, though I hope not badly wounded."

The old housekeeper approached with a steaming cup. "Now, sir," said she, "you must swallow this; you will find it allay the irritation of your nerves. Here, John, help Squire Benson off with his boots."

John did as he was bid, and the old lady continued, "This, sir, you may rely upon it, is a capital specific, composed wholly of simples. I shall prepare another dose when you go to bed, with a couple of pills; and perhaps it will be as well for Mr. Phillips to use his fleam, and take a little blood."

Benson had drawn off one boot, and nearly disencumbered himself of the other. He stared with astonishment at the selection from the *materia medica* which the well-meaning woman had prepared; but when he heard the proposal for bleeding him, he thrust his leg back again into the boot, and exclaimed, whilst his countenance assumed a most rueful aspect, "No, thank you, Mrs. Grace, no thank you; I never tasted physic in my life. Give me my other boot, John. Simples, doses, pills, and bleeding!—No, damme, I'd rather out and face Ned Bracey again."

"Ned Bracey!" exclaimed every one present, with undisguised alarm.

"Why, ay," continued Benson; didn't I tell you he met me at the coppice, where the tall trees stand arm and arm across the road, and make the way as dark as a dungeon?—A little brandy, farmer, if you please." He drank the liquor, and then went on: "Well, if I didn't, I meant to tell you; but Mrs.

Grace's simples drove everything else out of my head, which was tolerably shaken before, as you may see, Miss Phillips,"—pointing to the wound. "There, sure enough, we met; or rather, there I heard a voice I shall never forget cry, 'Stand!' for I could only indistinctly see some huge and erect mass barring my further progress. So I pulled out my special pleader,—it has a good straight barrel, farmer,—and answered him with its contents. In an instant I was felled from my horse by a blow, which I am convinced was given by some invisible demon in the air; and that's my satisfaction, for I have been conquered by devils, begging your pardon, Miss Phillips, and not men. Well, there I was, unhorsed and sprawling in the road, like a bad rider at the tail of a hunt. I am no child in strength myself, farmer; but my arms were pinioned as if they had been strapped to my side by a bellyband, whilst my leathern purse jingled in the rascal's hands. But it was no mortal; for I plainly saw the blue flames come streaming from his nostrils, and they lighted up his features sufficiently to show a skeleton's head upon a human body."

Joan listened with the most intense interest, but smiled contemptuously at the conclusion of the recital; whilst all but the farmer and his daughter uttered an exclamation of alarm and horror. The former heard the narrative with painful apprehension, which he struggled to subdue; and immediately offered to send out in pursuit, as the robber could not have retreated far.

Benson shrugged up his shoulders, as he took another glass of brandy, to the great scandal of the old housekeeper. "His retreat," said he—"that's good brandy, farmer—his retreat is too warm, I take it, for mere flesh and blood. And whom would you pursue? A spirit of the air,—the very devil himself? And whom would you send? A salamander,—one who can stand fire and brimstone? No, no, farmer;

had he been of mortal mould, I should not have been so speedily unhorsed: but let him come when I'm prepared, and be he man or devil, I'll——" The squire suddenly ceased; his eyes rolled round the room, his lower jaw fell, and he convulsively grasped the huge poker, to the great terror of all present, who deemed him somewhat shaken in the head.

Charles Davenport had entered the house during Benson's last exclamation, and his voice was heard giving some directions to the servants. In a few minutes he entered the apartment, where the squire still stood brandishing his formidable weapon. The countenance of Charles never seemed more mild and inoffensive as he stopped just within the door, and saw the lusty squire in an attitude of defence. At first, he appeared to consider him as a maniac, and his features changed to anxious solitude for the safety of Miss Phillips and her father; but they resumed their accustomed placidity as the farmer exclaimed, "This is Mr. Benson, Charles, of whom you have heard me speak; and, Mr. Benson, allow me the pleasure of introducing to your notice Mr. Davenport, my assistant at the abbey farm."

The squire bowed his head, whilst a ridiculous look of defiance was strongly contrasted with his seeming courtesy. Charles returned his salute, but displayed evident astonishment at the strange reception given by his new acquaintance, particularly as his face was yet stained with blood. The squire replaced the poker in the corner, and once more took his seat by the fire.

"Mr. Benson has been attacked and plundered," said the farmer, addressing Charles.

"And, I suppose, imagined me to be the robber at his heels," exclaimed Davenport; "and now I can account for his warlike deportment. But where has this happened?"

"He knows already—that is, the demon knows," answered Benson.

Charles laughed outright. "I fear neither man nor

demon, sir. Tell me the road you think he may have taken, and I will pledge my life to bring you some account of him."

"No doubt, no doubt. I thank you, Mr. What's-your name--Devilport, I believe," said the squire.

"Davenport, at your service," slowly replied Charles.

"Yes, Mr. Davenport. I thank you," uttered the squire most ruefully, "but pursuit would now be useless; he is too near—I mean, too far off—that is—damme if I know what I mean."

Miss Phillips and Davenport exchanged looks, and the former, unobserved, gave a significant glance at the brandy bottle, as she raised her hand to her head. Charles took the hint, and did not urge him further. The squire's wound was dressed, supper was served up, and the remainder of the evening was passed in conversing on this strange occurrence; whilst Benson, who diligently applied himself to the fine-flavoured cognac, afforded a fund of amusement by his rough jokes and occasional bewildered language.

The robbery of Squire Benson, a county magistrate, caused some little stir; but it quickly passed away, as not the least trace of the phantom highwayman (as he was now called) could be discovered; but Joan treasured the circumstances in her memory, and she longed to discover the mysterious being. Yet not as before did she speak of him to Charles Davenport, for Charles had acquired a mastery over her mind, and she seemed to live a tacit instrument to execute his will. He was ever kind to her, and his language, on all occasions, manifested respect mingled with the most devoted regard, though at times a restless impetuosity marked his manner, as if he doubted the constancy of her affection, and dreaded the hour which was to put it to the trial.

It was about two months after the robbery, and Joan, who had been engrossed by the perusal of an interesting book, sat in her apartment previous to re-

tiring to rest. The midnight hour had passed, and the morning of another day was advancing, when she closed the volume and stood looking from the window. The atmosphere was clear and frosty; the glittering stars shed their bright effulgence in the heavens, and dispersed a faint but additional light upon the landscape, whilst their flickering rays were finely contrasted by the red flame that issued from the blazing fire upon the hearth.

Joan gazed upon the pale luminaries, and she fancied there was a purity in their light that chided her own defalcation from virtue. The early years of innocence were contrasted with the interval of guilt, and she looked with moody melancholy towards the dark and leafless wood that skirted the hill-side. Suddenly the heavens were lighted up with vivid flashes, and the loud report of fire-arms echoed amongst the rocky knolls. She watched with the most intense interest, and at the lapse of several minutes she saw a single horseman, who with the utmost speed came dashing down the dell toward the abbey ruins. A conviction rushed upon her mind that this could be no other than the outlaw Bracey, and a bewildering sensation spread itself through her throbbing bosom. With the greatest astonishment, not unmingled with consternation, she saw that he possessed an accurate knowledge of every turn that might give him an advantage, if pursued; he threaded every maze, however hazardous, with perfect safety, and Joan saw him enter a recess where she knew he would be safe from pursuit; in fact, it was the very place where she had concealed Charles Davenport.

At this moment another truth came forcibly upon her. This, then, was the hiding-place of that terrific being, whom she had longed to see. He had been near her, when she knew not of it; he had, perhaps, heard her speak of him; yet there was a confusion in her thoughts and hurried recollections of so embarrassing a nature, as urged her, by an irresistible im-

pulse, to go to the apartment of Davenport, and inform him of the near neighbourhood of the dreaded highwayman.

The room occupied by Charles was at the other extremity of the building; and, taking her lamp, she passed through several long passages till she arrived at the desired door: it stood open, and she entered. The blazing fire burned brightly on the hearth, and cast its reddened glare upon every object as she approached the bed: it had been untouched. Her eyes looked wildly round the apartment, but Davenport was not there.

A tumultuous agitation shook every part of her frame; the thoughts of the demon-robber haunted her brain, and she deemed the moment of their meeting had at length arrived. She pressed her hand to her forehead, and writhed her fingers in her glossy hair, as the noise of advancing footsteps sounded in the passage; and she had just sufficient time to screen herself from observation amongst the dark green drapery of the bed, when a tall majestic figure hastily entered the room. He was enveloped in a cloak of serge, and as he turned his head towards the spot where Joan now lay concealed, she saw the blanched cheekbones, the toothless jaws of a human skull, round which a light blue flame was flickering.

The terrified girl looked on with horror; she would have closed her eyes, but desperation kept them fixed upon the spectre, who drew his cloak around him, examined the priming of a heavy pistol, and then, with one finger on the trigger, placed himself at the window which commanded a view of the avenue leading to the abbey. A cold sick shuddering came upon her as she viewed him standing, apparently immovable with listening attention. She tried to nerve herself for something dreadful; every pulse beat with feverish rapidity; but who can paint her delight as she heard the well-known voice of Charles close at hand! She sprung from her concealment to rush to

his protection,—she gazed with bewildered amazement round the room, as she found herself alone with the daring outlaw. He spoke to her, the voice thrilled with agony upon her soul,—for that moment informed her Charles Davenport and Edward Bracey were one.

"You are here then, sweet one!" said Bracey, as he removed the hideous mask, smeared with phosphorous, from his face. "You knew my peril, and have come to share my danger. Noble girl! the poor outlawed Bracey—for you know me now—will honour your devotedness. But mark!" he forcibly uttered between his compressed teeth, "there is but one in all yon group who knows my person. See, Joan, he rides foremost of the band." Joan looked down the avenue, and beheld a troop of horsemen gradually advancing; whilst a person, who reminded her of Benson, took the lead. "Mark, I say, love," he continued, whilst the trembling girl clung to him for support, "Bracey never missed his man." He straightened his arm, raised the pistol steadily in his hand, cast his eye along the barrel, and kept depressing the muzzle as the party advanced.

"Oh, for the love of Heaven, stay!" imploringly exclaimed the shrinking girl. "Davenport, or Bracey, or whatever your name may be, do not shed blood!"

"It is too late, my Joan, to hesitate," returned the highwayman, in a calm but decided voice. "You love me, dearest; and would you see the head that has reposed upon your bosom bleached by the winter's storm? Would you see the man who has slumbered in your arms suspended in an iron frame upon the borders of yon wood, till his bare bones are whitened in the sun? Nay, sweet one, tremble not; you foil me in my aim. Now, now," he exclaimed exultingly, "I have him,—and, Benson, I'm revenged!"

Whilst uttering this last exclamation, he pressed his finger on the trigger; a bright flash and a loud report followed; a deep groan responded to the dis-

charge, and a heavy body fell upon the ground. The whole party halted for a few minutes, and the hum of many voices was heard; till one, more shrill than the rest, cried out, "On, on, brave comrades! revenge the death of your gallant officer!"

The almost paralyzed Joan clung to her companion, who held his breath with eager listening to try and catch the conversation of the men. At length he started with desperate impetuosity, as the last order was given, and wildly muttered, "By every fiend of hell! I have been mistaken in my man. Benson is uninjured; but I will have him yet."

Bracey passed rapidly across the room to a recess, from which he took another pistol, and instantly returned to the window; but the party were now sheltered by the walls of the building, and he therefore sat himself down facing the door of the apartment, and, with cool determination on his countenance, reloaded the pistol he had fired, and waited in preparation for his enemies.

Joan looked at him, and conflicting emotions struggled in her breast. "Haste, Charles," she exclaimed, "and quit this spot. I will not upbraid you now. Oh! do not stop one moment; I can save you yet."

"No, no, dearest," he mildly answered, "there is no hope of rescue. The house is entirely surrounded; the path by which I gained this apartment is in possession of my foes, already banqueting on the anticipation of a sacrifice. Your father and the servants are aroused by my firing; but go, my Joan, retire to your room, and you will rest secure."

"Nay, Charles, or Bracey," she replied, "though my wrongs may cry to heaven for retribution, yet it cannot change my love. You shall not perish whilst there are means of safety."

"That I have merited your anger," he replied, "nay, more,—your curse, I candidly admit. But believe me, Joan, no other love has ever occupied my

heart, and now," he uttered with a faint smile, "it is not likely that there ever will. Yes!" he forcibly exclaimed, "I have deeply injured you; but the expiation is at hand. Leave me then, Joan, leave me, for I do not wish that you should witness it. Hark! they are already knocking at the outer door, and will be here immediately. One kiss, dear girl," he added, passing his arm around her, and clasping her to his breast, "one kiss; it perhaps will be the last." He pressed his lips to hers, then hastily disengaging himself, "Go, Joan," said he, "and do not hate my memory."

"I will *not* leave you, Bracey," exclaimed Joan; "there is death if you remain, and I will share it. Yet, if you will come with me, you may escape without discovery."

"Escape!" he wildly uttered; "why ay, life is still worth the preservation, if it were only to repay your tender care. Are we not linked by ties as firm as all the bonds which priestcraft can devise? Lead on, my guardian angel, for such you have already proved yourself."

They quitted the apartment. The highwayman, having thrown his mask and his cloak together, and carrying them under his arm, left no trace behind him, except the shattered glass. Joan conducted him along the upper passages unseen by the terrified servants, who crowded together in the hall; and whilst the knocking at the door had ceased for a time, and she heard her father's voice, they entered her own room.

"Here, here," she exclaimed, running to the bed that seemed to be a permanent fixture in an arched recess; "haste; move this away."

"It is easier to command than to perform," calmly returned Bracey, laying his hand upon the frame; "I should suppose *this* to be immovable."

"No," replied Joan, as she unfastened some iron clamps; "it is but removing these securities, and the

whole will come away. Then why do you tarry, Charles?"

Bracey looked upon the pale features of the lovely girl, who was exerting herself to save the life of her seducer, and he answered, "Now, by Heaven, do I deserve the worst of deaths, for having injured thee! But where is it you would place me, Joan? Believe me, I would rather die as a brave man ought, than be dragged from some secret nook to undergo a felon's fate."

"Hark!" whispered Joan, "they are coming hither. Quick! remove the bed, I say," and her voice assumed a tone of stern command.

Bracey obeyed, and removed the bed from the recess. Joan advanced to the now unoccupied spot, pulled back a panel in the old oak hangings, and a door presented itself to view. This was instantly opened.

"Now hasten," she exclaimed; "every moment is precious. Draw the bed towards you into its place—that will do; put down the clamps—and now shut to the slide."

Her directions were punctually complied with, and she had also entered the passage; but at the last command the robber paused. "Joan—Joan," he said, "you must not hazard more for me. Nay, dearest, stay in your apartment; they dare not harm you there, or if they durst attempt it, I shall be close at hand to deal them full measure in return."

Joan made no reply, but with firmness she stretched forth her hand, replaced the slide, and closed the door. Scarcely had this been accomplished, when an armed party entered the room. The fire was blazing brightly, the bed was perfectly smooth, and having vainly searched in every nook, they prepared to depart. At this moment, the fugitives heard the voice of Benson exclaim, "Stole away, lads, stole away; even the lair untouched. I owe the cub a little kindness, for she refused to kennel with me.

She cannot be far off; so forward, boys, we shall unearth them presently, and his majesty King Carolus shall find he has not made me a magistrate for nothing. Mr. Davenport must play the devil, forsooth. I'll play the devil with him, if he is anywhere hereabout, and try how he likes heat."

Bracey half opened the inner door, and his finger mechanically cocked the lock of his pistol. Joan heard the click, and firmly grasped his arm.

"Are you mad?" she whispered. "Would you sacrifice the life of both? I can die, Charles, for I have nothing now to live for; but I would be spared a little while longer for my father's sake."

The desperate man reclosed the door; he passed his arm round his hapless victim, and pressed her to his heart, but spoke not. In a few minutes all was still in the apartment, except the heavy tread of a sentinel, as he paced to and fro, or some hardened marauder who lingered behind his companions for the sake of plunder.

Joan took the arm of Bracey, and gently urged his departure. She guided him through many dark and winding passages, till he found himself in the underground vaults, and ultimately in the very cavern where he had left his horse, which now stood ready harnessed.

"Lead him forth," said Joan solemnly; "lose not an instant. I will go with you to the northern gate, and then we part."

"And having thus far saved the wretched outlaw," said Bracey, "you will bid him abandon you to your fate?—never, Joan! Though I have outraged every human law—though I have dared the majesty of Heaven, and outbraved his vengeance, I will still maintain my truth to you inviolate; but you must away with me."

"Charles," replied the weeping girl, "for I will still call you by that name, is this a time to talk of love?" She shuddered. "Oh, how is the sacred

character profaned between us! But hear me. You know I am above disguise. I have been, I still am devoted to you, but I have another duty to perform — my father! Hasten then, Charles, and leave this spot, so full of danger to a life I would freely give my own to save. But we shall meet again, Charles, though now I am determined not to quit my father."

"And this to Bracey, from one whom he has ruined?" said the outlaw mournfully. "But be it as you wish. Oh, Joan, had I but known you earlier! By Heaven!" he continued with vehemence, "I sink to childish weakness! Reflection comes too late, and I must combat with remorse! Yet, before we part," — he took her hand and pressed it to his lips — "oaths would be profaned upon my tongue; — yet believe me, Joan, I am yours for ever."

He led his fleet animal according to the directions which she gave, till they came to the place she had already named. "Bracey," said she, in a slow and solemn tone, "do you believe in a hereafter?"

"I do," replied the agitated man; "and though driven by my wrongs to execute my vengeance, may the most bitter torments be my portion if ever I desert you!"

"Enough!" she answered; "and now farewell! Turn to the right round the old oak-tree, and speed through the lane that leads over the brow of the hill. But why need I tell you which way you must proceed? These roads must be familiar to a man whose occupation has been so desperate and daring."

Bracey smiled as he once more pressed her in his arms. He then mounted his horse, and spurring up his mettle, the noble animal soon bore him from her sight. The wretched Joan stood listening till the clang of the horse's hoofs could no longer be heard, and with a sinking heart she returned to the passages which led to her apartment. She arrived at

the secret door; no footsteps were heard, but there was an unusual heat, a suffocating vapour that came upon her as she cautiously unclosed it. The panel remained in the same state in which it had been left, and with earnest attention she leaned her ear against it. There was a rustling and a crackling noise of she knew not what, and the increasing heat became almost insupportable. With a trembling hand she gently drew back the slide, so as to command a view of the interior of the apartment, but recoiled with horror when she beheld that the whole was enveloped in one mass of flame.

CHAPTER V

"Never again to battle shalt thou go!
The hand of death hath touched thee!"

Full of Nineveh.

It will now be necessary to go back to the period of Benson's robbery, in order to account for the circumstances already recorded. The squire, notwithstanding the roughness of his nature, had keenly felt the rejection of his hand by Miss Phillips; for it had wounded him in the most susceptible of his feeling,—the love of self. He had heard of the supposed Davenport becoming an inmate of the abbey, and there were not wanting many who wantonly stirred up all the torturing passions of jealousy, in order to excite a spirit of resentment against the apparent favourite.

The first meeting of Benson and Davenport was on the night of the robbery, when the former was so struck by the voice of the latter, that when he heard it again on his sheltering at the abbey, it caused a strong though confused suspicion of identity with the reckless highwayman. Still, his obligations to Farmer Phillips restrained him from making any open declaration, until something should occur to place the fact beyond a doubt; he therefore determined to watch the abbey after nightfall, hoping to obtain some powerful testimonial, or to have his suspicions cleared away.

Night after night did he continue his watch, snugly concealed in a copse at the corner where the avenue opened on the lawn (for a superstitious dread kept him from going to the ruins near the palisades);

but nothing appeared to confirm his apprehensions. Everything remained in its quiescent state; but his constant approximation to the beautiful girl, whom he frequently saw looking from her window before she retired to rest, awakened sentiments which he did not try to subdue, and the thoughts of Davenport enjoying a preference to himself, gave an aggravated parching to his thirst for revenge. Still, his watching was unavailing, and he was about to abandon his enterprise altogether; especially as his perplexity had been increased, by hearing of robberies having been perpetrated by Bracey in different parts of the county, whilst he was rigidly on the look-out to catch the supposed Davenport.

The squire was slowly returning to his farm early on one of the mornings after an unsuccessful night-watch, and a more than ordinary depression rested on his generally good spirits; but repeated disappointments had vexed him, and though he could not dis sever in his mind the connection of Davenport and Bracey as one and the same person, yet the fact of robberies being committed whilst he felt satisfied that it was hardly possible for Davenport to be absent from the abbey, filled him with a dread that there was more than something human,—a sort of unaccountable agency, which he could not overcome.

He had reached within a mile of his own gate, when the sounds of a horse's hoofs were heard coming rapidly towards him. Full of the thoughts of Bracey, with whom—notwithstanding the boastings he had made—he dreaded an encounter, the squire hastily pulled up; and having dismounted, accidentally gave his animal a lash with the whip, which made him start away, whilst his master concealed himself behind a hedge. Benson's horse sprang forward towards his home; but, startled at sounds coming in an opposite direction to his course, he stopped, pawed the ground, and as the other steed approached, he re-

turned with rapid speed to the spot where he had left his master.

The advancing rider checked his fleet career, and gently walked towards the frightened animal, which was now within a few feet of the squire's hiding-place. Benson, from his secrecy, commanded a full view of the horseman, and was seized with indescribable sensations when he beheld the mysterious being Bracey. The thumb of the hideling was involuntarily hooked, in the act of cocking the lock of his pistol; the fore-finger softly touched the trigger; but he had already tried the inefficacy (as he imagined) of fire-arms, and therefore not only hesitated, but crouched down behind his cover in breathless suspense.

The robber soothed the fears of the lone beast, and pulling up by its side, exclaimed, "By Heavens, it is Benson's! So, Hector, so:—gently, gently, Hector. The squire has been upon his revels, no doubt, and the drunken brute has had another tumble on the road. But he must not meet me here." He clapped his spurs to the sides of his panting steed, and speedily disappeared.

Benson had listened most attentively to the clear voice of the highwayman, and at the same time carefully reconnoitred his person. "I am right," he softly articulated, whilst rising from his covert. "All doubts with me are over;—stand, Hector, stand!" The horse was restless. "The abbey is, then, a resort for plunderers. Farmer Phillips bags my gold, and Bracey picks the girl. Stand still, Hector; has the devil infected you, too? No matter; we shall soon draw cover. I will have as pretty a set of beagles down upon them as ever scented track, and it will be odd if I am not in at the death." He threw himself on to the saddle, and in a few minutes was safely housed under his own roof.

With the cunning peculiar to his character, Benson appeared at the abbey on the following day, and in

the course of conversation, mentioned his intention of going into Leicestershire to receive a considerable sum of money; adding, "If Bracey should get hold of the scent, he will not find me quite so easily run down as the last time. By the Lord! farmer, I should like to meet with him again."

"The meeting would not be one for courtly compliment, I'm thinking," said Joan.

"No, Miss Phillips," returned the squire, "I am not used to courtly language. Rough sincerity is far more estimable than polished fraud; but," added he, casting a significant and malicious look towards her, "all are not in my way of thinking."

"It would be a pure world, indeed, if every one thought like Squire Benson," said Davenport. "'The Farrier's Guide' would supersede the melting Ovid; and ladies' love have no other measurement than that which is applied to ascertain the length of a fetlock."

Joan laughed heartily at this sally, which deeply wounded the self-love of the lusty squire; yet he joined the laugh, till it was evident his shrill voice betokened anything but natural pleasure.

"I am pleased to see you thus amused," said the farmer; "but think it is ill-timed, for Bracey is before my eyes."

Davenport started from his seat; he cast a withering look upon the farmer, and then turned with proud defiance towards Benson, exclaiming, "Then why not take him?"

"You are over hasty, Charles," said Joan; "my father meant not that Bracey was here in person; but that he feared there would be danger to the squire, and therefore his mind's eye beheld the object of distrust."

Charles instantly resumed his seat, and his features recovered their accustomed placidity. Benson gave an idiotic stare, whilst the farmer, slowly rising from his chair, advanced towards Davenport. "My brave

youth," said he, "that glance of yours was terrible. I know your enmity to the highwayman, and such a determined look as that which you just gave, assures me he would find a powerful opponent. Why not, then, accompany the squire in his journey."

"That will I most cheerfully do," replied Davenport, "if the squire will honour me by accepting my protection."

"I am my own safeguard, sir," exclaimed Benson haughtily, at the same time feeling assured that a plan was laid to plunder him, and secretly pleased that they would fall into the snare. "I thank you for your civil offer,—it was, no doubt, kindly meant; but," turning to Charles with a glance of defiance, "Bracey will find no child to deal with."

In a short time, he took his departure; and as he rode down the avenue he muttered to himself, "It is all plain enough. Here's a pretty lair for thieves—old and young, all alike. As for the girl, she'll turn and double like a witch. I'll soon have a net over them—ay, when they least expect it. Now, Hector, beast, yo must do your best, for we have many a mile to go before the sun is set." He spurred his strong animal, and turning from the avenue, entered on the road towards Northampton.

Benson knew that several troops of dragoons had been quartered in that town, and aware of the enmity that still existed against the Roundheads, he lost no time in presenting himself at the colonel's quarters, and requesting an interview. Colonel Stanhope readily acceded to his request, for there was a deep-rooted animosity in his heart on account of the losses his family had sustained in the civil war; and he listened with great attention to the squire, who artfully represented that he had every reason to believe a band of rebels were organizing in his neighbourhood. He therefore earnestly begged for an officer and some men, to take the leader, and as many of them as he could find, into custody.

The colonel, at first, objected to interfere in what he conceived the peculiar duty of the civil power; but when Benson informed him he was a magistrate, and would attend in person to see his own warrant for their apprehension executed, Stanhope no longer refused, but issued orders for a lieutenant and fourteen men to attend the squire, and follow his directions.

The party were soon mounted; but previous to their starting, Benson, under the plea of concealing his person from the knowledge of the peasantry, induced the gallant officer, who resembled him in size and stature, to exchange cloaks. The trooper unhesitatingly complied, and the whole were soon passing through the town at a smart trot, followed by many an anxious eye; for apprehension was busy in conjecture that they would return with fresh victims for inexorable vengeance.

In proceeding as he had done, Benson had a double motive—the destruction of Bracey, and the securing Miss Phillips to himself. His intention was to make such representations to the officer, as would consign the highwayman—not in that character, but as a traitor, to instant death. The farmer would then be in his power as the harbourer of a murderer and a robber, and the daughter's dishonour was to be the security for the life of the parent. He did not entertain a doubt but that Bracey would be somewhere on the road, with an intent to plunder him; yet, should he fail in this, it was but going at once to the abbey, and to seize him there.

The rapidity of their movements prevented Benson from conversing with his companion: but after riding over several miles of ground, they slackened their pace, and then the squire related the various particulars he had strung together respecting the cause of the errand they were on.

"What craven fear is this?" exclaimed the trooper. "Am I, Lieutenant Wharton, with fourteen picked

and chosen men from the Royals, brought hither, then, to take, kill, burn, and destroy one solitary man? By my hopes of promotion, we shall become the very laughing-stock to the regiment!"

"You will find ample employment for your picked and chosen men," answered Benson drily; "he is no common mortal whom we seek."

"So it would appear," scornfully returned the other; "or, as I said, fourteen picked and chosen men from the most favourite regiment under the crown, with me, Lieutenant Wharton, at their head, would not have now been here. Surely Colonel Stanhope must suppose old Noll hath risen from the grave; and if you will but swear it is so, and that we have laid his evil spirit, by my hopes of promotion! in these days of plots and murders I shall be made a major at the least."

Benson smiled at the conceit, and shortly answered, "You must lay him first."

"Nay, good civilian," said the trooper; "you must bring him to our presence. These sturdy ghosts care nought for Latin or for law. Processes, civil or uncivil, lay or ecclesiastical, it is all the same to them. But I have a method of my own, taught by my ancient grandmother, and you shall see it practised, if you will."

"But the individual we are in pursuit of is no ghost," replied Benson pettishly; "and much as you may feel disposed to ridicule, he will not be so easily subdued."

"Your pardon, worthy sir," returned the officer, "I meant you no offence. But, as I hope to be a major, you have this night spoiled the prettiest *tête-à-tête* that ever Cupid promised since we have been in winter quarters. One whose eye would raise a dozen spirits, and whose tongue would keep them in subjection. It was cruel in Colonel Stanhope to make me a *night-errant*, a miserable Don Quixote, to fight with ghosts and windmills, whilst my lovely Arabella sits

pinning in her bower—I mean her boudoir, it is too cold for bowers—and chides my seeming falsehood.”

“I am sorry, captain,” said Benson sneeringly, “to have deprived you of those enjoyments, which are so well suited to the rugged character of the soldier.”

“Your pardon, again, good civil *dus*,” replied the officer, “I am no captain yet, though I hope to be a major. The smiles of the fair are to a soldier like the white plumes upon his crest,—pure and bright upon parade, but packed up with the baggage when he meets the enemy. He has proudly worn them once, and he hopes proudly to wear them again.”

“You are expecting to lay your plumes aside, then, I believe,” said Benson; “for I hear the Frenchers have broke covert, and you are likely to make a burst amongst them.”

“My plumes, worthy expounder of the statutes,” rejoined the trooper, “are, you may perceive, already laid aside for this adventure with your hero. I am to-night, forsooth, to play the redoubtable character of Jack the Giant-killer with your Hurlo Thrumbo, and perhaps may never reach *la belle France*. Were you ever in Holland, good warrant-serving justice? By my hopes of promotion! that is the place for gallant souls,—love and war, war and love, succeeding each other so rapidly, that we scarce could tell when we were fighting or when we were courting. Then the beautiful Dutch goddesses,—all method and petticoats, with earrings of shining gold as big as the clapper of St. Paul’s great bell, and their ‘Yaw weal, mynheer.’ Heaven bless them! I did not see one but would have put Venus to the blush.”

“You forget your Arabella,” said Benson, laughing.

“Not at all, not at all,” replied the officer, “Arabella is superior to Venus. I should like to see the man would dare to tell me otherwise. Such eyes of brilliancy,—such a tongue for wit,—such lovely features; and then her smile,—it was cruel to make me

break my engagement; and now she watches the lazy finger of the clock, and 'sighs for him who's far away.'"

"You are confident of her affection, then, it seems," said Benson; "these females are mostly tripping jades."

"I am sorry you have found them so," retorted Wharton; "for I suppose, as the Puritans would say, 'Beloved, thou dost speak from thine own experience.' But, sir, I have the credit of possessing not altogether a frightful countenance, my leg shows to great advantage, and the certain grace of *un militaire*, are powerful sureties—recognizances, I think you call them—in which to bind a lady's heart."

"I cannot see the great advantage of your leg as a security," replied Benson, laughing; "it is the worst bail that can be taken. But, really, you have formed a very good opinion of your intrinsic merits."

"It is the characteristic of the regiment," answered the officer. "But I was telling you about these Dutch ladies; they have such winning ways with them. I was quartered with a burgomaster, whose daughter had a fine pair of eyes to judge of merit in a man. She was none of your die-away sort—whining and pining for nick-nacks and *bijouterie*: she knew what real love was. You have seen a ship's cable; it was nothing to the length of her father's purse,—every strand a layer of gold. "Yes, hers was real love, and I rendered myself extremely *dear* to her, I promise you. But, like Hector and Andromache, we were obliged to part, and I came away, my breast swelling with——"

"Disappointment and vexation, I suppose," said Benson.

"Wrong again, right worshipful of the quorum," replied the trooper, laughing; "for whilst I held her in my arms and pressed her to my heart, I felt part of her father's long cable thrust into my buff jerkin. Ah! hers was solid and substantial love, and——"

"Hist! hist!" said Benson, interrupting him; "we are now upon the track, and must think of other matters."

"Halt!" cried the officer, as the men closed up. "Front!" he added, and they wheeled their horses into line.

The place which Benson had selected was a part of the high road that ran beneath the branches of wide spreading trees, which overshadowed the way, and rendered it more dark and dreary. Huge mounds of earth were thrown up in different places, as if this spot had been selected, during the civil war, as a place of defence, and the hillocks had been formed into fortifications for that especial service.

"Now, then," said Benson, "divide your troop; place half of the men on one side, and the other half opposite. Let the person we seek come in between the lines, and when I give the signal, fire at once."

"Oh, thou Solon of the midland counties!—Lycurgus of Northamptonshire!" exclaimed the lieutenant; "thou mayest be an excellent justice of the peace, but art no judge of war, as appears by thy military tactics. Should I follow your directions, I might lose the greatest part of my men from the effect of the cross-fire from their comrades' weapons. But leave this arrangement to me. Sergeant Macalister!" The sergeant rode to his side, and sat poised upright in his saddle. "Good sergeant," continued Wharton, "we are here upon extraordinary duty. You have heard of Guy of Warwick, I suppose?" The sergeant assented. "We have this night," added the lieutenant, "to capture a mightier man than he, even with the famous Dun Cow to back him. So we must be prepared for this Goliath of Gath, and post the men accordingly."

"Is there but one man, sir?" inquired the sergeant; "he will scarcely be a joint a piece. I thought there would be a hundred of them at the least. And all this bustle is really for a single man?"

"Nay, good sergeant," replied the incorrigible officer, "I did not say that he was single; he may be married, for aught I know, and have as many wives as Solomon. But here you are, fourteen of Charles's Royals—the ranting bully-boys—to seize, capture, and take into custody one Mr. —. But I cannot give you right information of his name, and must therefore refer you to yon dispenser of 'wise saws and modern instances.' You have seen Shakespeare, sergeant?"

"Shake-spear? Shake-spear? Was he of the pikemen, sir?" inquired the sergeant.

"No, good trooper," replied the officer! "he led the drama in the Thespian corps."

"A drummer, sir? Then I don't know him," said the sergeant, rather proudly.

"Well, well; let us lose no time, Macallister," said the merry officer. "Go; place two sentinels in advance behind yon mound, and remain with them. And, corporal, take two others, and pass back the way you came to where a deep ravine lies on the southern side. Choose you the opposite; for I observed an opening in the brake upon the north, through which this champion might escape. I will remain here with the main body. But remember, do not fire or take life; it would be a disgrace upon fourteen of the Royals not to secure one prisoner without killing him."

Benson listened to these orders in some surprise; for they plainly indicated that, notwithstanding the lieutenant's frivolity, he had attentively noticed every part of the road they had travelled, and was perfect master of his present position. Yet, when the squire heard the humane direction to spare the delinquent's life, he exclaimed, "Major, your ill-judged clemency will but defeat your object. You had better shoot the wretch at once, than allow him the slightest chance of escape."

"I am no major yet, God help me!" returned the

trooper; "yet, by my hopes of promotion! I trust that you will this night see such daring deeds of valour upon your desperate enemy, as will raise me up one step at least; for preferment has latterly gone by purchase, and I have none of that same Dutchman's cable left to buy it with."

"I can but give the whoop," said Benson doggedly. "Your men are under your own orders, and no doubt will obey you."

"'Tis military law," rejoined the other. "But pray describe your delicate monstrosity, that we may not be running into error."

"If you mean Bra—that is, the man we are to take," said Benson, "he is tall, wears a trooper's cloak, and carries a flaming skull upon a living body; but that is rank deception. His horse is black and will outstrip the fleetest in your troop; and he himself is of that determined character, which courts danger for the love of it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Wharton; "*a lusus naturæ*; a death's head upon a pike-staff. But go, my men, to your duties, and try and catch this spectre if you can. The signal is to be a single flash."

The night was fast merging into morning, as the sergeant took his two men and proceeded to the advance. Two others followed the corporal, and the rest stood at intervals under the dark shadowings of the trees, which entirely obscured them from the sight of the casual traveller.

Scarcely had the sergeant reached his post, when the noise of many hoofs upon the frost-bound road, and the voices of drovers urging their jaded cattle to greater speed, were heard, and in a few minutes Macallister observed a large drove of beasts come slowly pacing on. No signal was given, and they continued to approach the main body.

The lieutenant gently walked his horse down the line of his men; but, on reaching their extremity, he suddenly clapped the spurs into his charger, and

retraced the ground at full speed to the spot where Benson stood. Again he flew along his line, and again, with the same rapidity, was at Benson's side. "How is this?" he hurriedly exclaimed. "Six of my men are at the outlay, and yet I've nine remaining."

"It cannot be," said Benson, "the darkness has deceived you. I saw the six depart." He turned his horse and together they numbered the party—they were, indeed, nine.

"Treachery is at work," said Wharton, with much bitterness; "but we must circumvent it. Take the five men on the right, sir, and gallop down to the corporal; whilst with the rest, I join the sergeant. They know the men better than I, and then we shall ascertain who the intruder is."

The separation was instantly effected; but the cattle were now so close upon the corporal's post, as to impede the approach of Benson's men. The squire, however, more accustomed to the passing of a drove, rode quickly through. The corporal was sitting his horse within the gap, one of the men was near him on his left, and the other was at a greater distance on his right. Benson rode up to the first, exclaiming,—
"Who have we here?"

"Tis Wilson and the corporal," replied the man.

Benson pushed impatiently on to the sentry on the right. He seemed carelessly sitting his horse, with his huge cloak drawn closely over him, so as to screen even his face from the cold night air,—
"And who are you?" demanded the squire.

"NED BRACEY!" returned the man, throwing open his cloak, and showing the cadaverous head of death lighted up by a lambent flame; at the same time, raising himself up in his stirrups, with one blow from the butt of his pistol he laid Benson stretched upon the ground. The highwayman immediately clapped his spurs to the sides of his noble animal, and darted along the road. The corporal's party saw the

whole transaction, and their carbines were instantly unslung. Scarcely a moment elapsed before the loud discharge was heard, but the horseman still pushed on, apparently unharmed.

"Forward!" shouted the corporal, and the men immediately put themselves in motion; but the cattle had got before them, and the noise of the firing had so terrified the brutes, that they were running from side to side, tossing their huge horns, and rendering it extremely hazardous to push the horses past.

The blow from Bracey had been designed for Benson's head, but the latter using a dexterous evasion, it fell upon his neck, yet with sufficient weight to throw him from his saddle. Though severely injured, deep resentment, mingled with a thirst for vengeance, stirred up his spirit. He was soon remounted and in pursuit. The flashes and reports of the fire-arms had brought down the lieutenant's party at full gallop, and the cattle being driven on one side, the whole sixteen were rapidly following the daring robber.

But it will, perhaps, be necessary to mention a few circumstances to account for the appearance of the highwayman amongst the dragoons. When Benson visited the abbey in the early part of the day, it was precisely for the purpose of drawing the supposed Davenport into a snare, and the taunting language he had used deeply nettled the robber; who, believing the squire's account of his journey for the purpose of receiving money to be true, resolved to punish the boaster for his temerity, by lightening him of his gold. As soon as he conjectured the whole of the inmates of the abbey had retired to their repose for the night, he mounted his good horse; and posting himself in a gloomy part of the road, a short time previous to the coming up of the dragoons, the officer and Benson passed him by without perceiving him; but he distinctly heard and instantly knew the shrill voice of the squire, and became immediately aware of

the errand they were on. A desperate impulse urged him at once to level his betrayer to the dust; but the remembrance of Joan, and the conviction that his own fate would then be certain, restrained him. He therefore determined to remain still, and, as soon as the men had proceeded on, to return to the abbey. The troopers came straggling two or three together, and Bracey smiled when he viewed the array which had been deemed necessary to conquer one man. There were only the corporal and one dragoon to come up, when the beautiful animal rode by the high-wayman became impatient of restraint, and, notwithstanding every effort to keep him in, Bracey saw that the noise would be certain to attract attention, and therefore boldly dashed into the space left between the corporal and the main body of the men. With the most admirable management he preserved his distance from both, and in the darkness of the night, aided by wearing a similar cloak to the one worn by the dragoons, he succeeded in deceiving the whole, who took him for a comrade. Being the rearmost man but one at the halt, he had filed off to the right by the direction of the corporal, and became posted where Benson had encountered him. Bracey had heard the recommendation of the squire to put him to death, and it stimulated him to take the first opportunity of being revenged. He was debating in his own mind whether he should wait for any accidental occurrence on the present occasion, or whether he should slip away unseen and hasten homewards, reserving his vengeance to another period.

In the mean time, he gradually increased his distance from the corporal, and put on his hideous mask, which had rendered him a terror to the county. He had attained sufficient ground to afford him good space for a start, and was on the point of quitting his station, when the well-known voice of Benson sounded near him. He drew his cloak closely about him, grasped his pistol by the muzzle (choosing to reserve

his fire, and deeming the powerful energy of his arm sufficient to silence the squeaking Colossus for ever), and waited his approach. The result is already known.

Benson rightly judged that Bracey would push for the abbey, but not by the main road; and though he, himself a reckless fox-hunter, would have followed the dangerous route of the highwayman by daylight, he did not care to risk his life (already barely redeemed from death) in the obscurity of the night. He therefore shouted to the lieutenant for the men to use their utmost speed, and he would lead the way, hoping to reach the avenue in time to intercept the robber, particularly as it was the shortest distance, and they would be less exposed to accidents.

Bracey had disappeared from view, when suddenly the dark form of the robber was seen against the light of the sky, as he recklessly rushed along the summit of the hill upon the left, and seemed like a creation of the bewildered brain, or some demon of the air, mocking the vain pursuit; whilst his loud shout and laugh of derision maddened the disappointment of the dragoons.

"Halt!" shouted Wharton; and the men instantly drew up. "Unslung carbines!" he continued. "Ready—present—fire!"

The noise of the report echoed amongst the cliffs and caverns, and the bullets whistled through the air, or rang against the rocks: but Bracey had gained the point for which he had exposed himself. The halt of the men would afford him time to increase his distance, and, at the moment of the discharge, he dashed down the dell and disappeared.

"Forward!" shouted Wharton. "If that fellow should escape, my hopes of promotion are at an end."

The party rushed rapidly on, and overtook Benson at the entrance of the avenue. The latter reined in as the officer approached, and uttered, with much

bitterness, "I told you, sir, it was no ordinary man we sought. He is earth'd before this; but we must contrive to stop him up and prevent escape, whilst the abbey is undergoing search."

"Upon the half trot!" cried Wharton; and the men instantly slackened their speed. "Well, most worthy knight of the mittimus," he continued, addressing Benson, "I stand committed for trial, and that fellow must be the very devil himself, or Doctor Faustus, if he thinks to escape King Charles's Royals thus. Guards shall be posted round the house,—and a most romantic-looking place it is,—a perfect convent. Are you sure there are no vestals—no nuns?"

"This is not a time for jesting, sir," said Benson, somewhat contemptuously; "the king's service requires that we should be prompt in duty."

"Many thanks for your sage communication," returned the officer. "What further directions would your generalship propose?"

"We must besiege this place, sir," answered Benson, "and take it at once."

"Excellent tactician!" exclaimed the officer; and then calling the sergeant to his side, he continued, "Macallister, our worthy *civil* conductor here, directs that we should besiege this place, and take it at once."

"If we are to besiege it, sir," replied the sententious sergeant, "we shall not take it at once; and if we take it at once, there will be no use in besieging it."

"Spoke like an oracle," said Wharton. "You should have served with Cromwell, and then might have been styled, Confound-the-would-be-wisdom-of-the-world Macallister."

The party were now emerging from the avenue and entering upon the lawn; and Benson, finding the ridicule rather pointed, or from some other cause, rode to the rear. The officer gave a rapid, but com-

prehensive glance over every part of the building, and then, addressing the sergeant, said, "It is a pretty place for a siege."

"It looks very strong, sir," rejoined Macallister. "We have no artillery; and such a building as this, with moat, portcullis, and drawbridge, might hold out for ever against our carbines."

"Moat, portcullis, and drawbridge!" said Wharton. "Really, good trooper, I cannot see them. This is a green lawn, and you two bending trees are humble willows, stooping to the earth; and for your portcullis, it is merely some trellis-work above the door, to which a clematis has been trained."

"Is it well garrisoned, sir?" inquired the sergeant. "Are there many rebels withinside?"

"The only one I know of," returned Wharton, "is the man we were sent to apprehend, and I have only the magistrate's word for that. Eh! what? Has the man vanished?"

"No, sir," replied the sergeant; "he has fallen into the rear."

"Well, then, good Sergeant Macallister," continued the officer, "we must open the assault, and carry the place by storm. It is, as you, say, well fortified by nature, and art seems to have latterly been called in aid. How admirably it might be defended, and what a discharge of musketry might be poured upon the advance from those noble windows!"

A bright flash, a crash of broken glass, and a loud report followed this remark, and the lieutenant cried out, "They are occupied, as I hope to be a ma——" The ball had passed through his heart. He sat for an instant on the saddle, then fell from his horse, and that body, which the moment before had been animated with as noble and as proud a spirit as ever claimed England for a country, lay stretched upon the ground a lifeless corpse.

Benson had foreseen the probability of such a reception, and had therefore dropped behind. The

men gathered round their fallen officer, and a curse, "not loud but deep," was almost simultaneously uttered by every one. The sergeant alighted for a moment, placed his hand upon poor Wharton's breast; but no throb, no pulsation was felt beneath it. He shook his head and mournfully exclaimed, "It is all over: his promotion is at an end. But he shall be exalted up to heaven, for a better dragoon never yet crossed a charger."

Benson shouted for revenge; the serjeant directed one man to stay by the body, and with the rest proceeded to the abbey doors, against which he beat with the utmost vehemence, as if desirous of giving vent to his high-wrought feelings. It had the desired effect; for by the time an answer was returned, Macallister's pulse had resumed its wonted temperament, and the passions of the man had subsided into the cool determination of the soldier.

"Who is it that demands admittance at this unseasonable hour?" inquired the shrill voice of Mrs. Grace. "Who is it, I ask, that seeks thus to disturb the quiet of a peaceful mansion, and rouse its inmates from their slumbers?"

Not a lip was moved in reply. "Why don't you speak, sergeant?" said Benson, half ashamed of appearing as an enemy where he had so often been admitted as a friend. "Explain our business, sergeant, and tell them what you want."

"Excuse me, sir," replied Macallister, sitting his horse unmoved. "In cases like the present, the civil takes precedence of the martial law. Do you read aloud your warrant, and we are prepared either to besiege or storm. Attention!—front!—wheel into line!—halt!—dismount!"

These several evolutions were performed in very little more time than was required to give the word of command, and the troopers, hanging their bridles over the iron palisading, drew up by the side of the sergeant at the great door.

"We are come," said Benson, "with the most friendly intentions, Mrs. Grace; for we have every reason to believe a noted high—I mean a rebel—is concealed somewhere within the abbey walls. Therefore, open the doors, good Mrs. Grace, and give us free admission."

"Is it you, Squire Benson?" replied the simple housekeeper. "Then I suppose there can be no treachery, and I may unfold the portals." She proceeded to remove a massive bar; but the loud voice of her master, commanding her to keep the door fast, arrested her intentions.

"How! Mr. Benson, what is this?" exclaimed the farmer. "Do you repay hospitality with ingratitude? Why have you brought an armed force, at this dark hour of the night, to assault the dwelling of a friend?"

"Farmer," returned Benson, "if you would but quietly open the door, I would explain the whole in a few minutes."

"It may be explained, sir, where you are," replied the farmer.

Benson felt that every moment gave Bracey an additional opportunity for escape, and impatience throwing him off his guard, he loudly exclaimed, "Why the fact is, farmer, you have earthed the varmint. Turn him out, then, for the field is waiting."

"I do not comprehend your meaning," replied Phillips. "If there is, however, any person of common sense at hand, who can give me the requisite information, to him I shall hold myself indebted."

During the foregoing colloquy, Sergeant Macallister had stood like a perfect statue; but his ears had attentively taken in every word that had been uttered, and when he heard the last expression of the farmer, he raised his head. "I am of opinion, sir,—whoever you may be that govern the garrison:—I say, sir, I am of opinion, that by man of sense you design to

address yourself to me, who now command a detachment of Charles's Royals in the room of Lieutenant Wharton, returned killed, and——"

"Killed?" exclaimed the farmer. "Not upon my grounds, I hope?"

"Even before your very door has the fortune of war disposed of him," mournfully ejaculated the sergeant; "and therefore, seeing that the command devolves on me, I——"

"By whose hand did he fall?" impatiently inquired the farmer, interrupting him.

"Say by the hand of one Charles Davenport," whispered Benson.

"Say it yourself," rejoined Macallister; "for I cannot vouch for the thing."

"Tell me," hastily demanded the farmer, "and trifle not with an old man's agony;—by what means has blood been shed?"

"A ball from the garrison embrasures,—I mean the windows of the building," said the sergeant, "has dismounted one of the prettiest troopers in our regiment."

"But is he really dead?" inquired the farmer.

"Really dead," returned the sergeant.

"And the murderer?" continued the farmer.

"Is secured in this house," replied Macallister.

"Then my doors are open; for I will never harbour a deliberate murderer," cried the farmer, whilst a deep groan burst from his agitated breast.

The bars and bolts were speedily removed, and in a few minutes the party entered the porch.

"Seize on that man!" said Benson, addressing Macallister, and pointing to the farmer.

"I will put him under confinement and place a sentry over him, agreeably to the forms of war," replied the sergeant. "And now, my men, search for the miscreant who has slain our officer."

Macallister issued his orders, and, with equal surprise and mortification, Farmer Phillips found

himself a prisoner under his own roof, without being able to ascertain the cause ; and the only reasonable conjecture he could make was, that Davenport had at length been discovered by the Royalist party, and was about to be apprehended. Under the most agonizing doubts and fears respecting his daughter, he was thrust into a small room in the centre of the building, and a stout dragoon stood sentinel at the door ; but his lips were sealed as to the events of the night. In vain the farmer implored to be released ; his entreaties were met with a cold denial, and every attempt at egress brought the bright steel within a few inches of his breast.

CHAPTER VI.

"Fire! fire!"

THE troopers ranged through the building, Benson leading the way; but no traces of Bracey, except the shattered window, could be discovered, and conjecture was busily at work as to what could have become of both the highwayman and Miss Phillips. The supernatural character of the man began to be discussed, with various hints that he certainly must be more than mortal to have escaped the many shots that had been fired at him. Still there seemed no possibility of their having quitted the abbey, and every apartment and closet,—nay, even the very cabinet of Miss Phillips, containing the jewellery and trinkets of her late mother, were rigidly inspected, but without avail.

The Royals, however, would have lost their character, if they had not occasionally stopped to discuss the merits of any entables that came in their way; and the peculiar qualities of a piece of French brandy, which they found in one of the storerooms, occupied their devoted attention as men of taste. It would, indeed, have required an amazing quantity of strong drink amongst this famous regiment to have overpowered the balance of reason; but it was seldom that brandy of such exquisite flavour fell in their march, and not a few of the men detected each other in studying the geographical position of the closet, till, by their curvilinear motions, they gave powerful indications of fixing the latitude and longitude of it by spherical projection. The Royals had always been particularly celebrated for sobriety and temperance where liquor was scarce; but they certainly had one

great failing, and that was hard drinking whenever anything strong enough could be procured.

Benson vainly endeavoured to keep them from straggling; but even he, with the true spirit of a fox-hunter, had made copious demands upon the brandy, till the whole party were in that state in which drunken attempts at rigid sobriety are rendered so admirably ridiculous. The vexation of the squire at the disappearance of Miss Phillips had tended to inflame his mind, and he rushed through every part of the house with the intemperate fury of a madman; but she was nowhere to be found.

The body of the lieutenant was deposited in the same room with Farmer Phillips, whose agonized spirit received an additional weight of distress by such strange companionship. He could hear the noise made by the troopers, but was totally ignorant of what was passing in the house, as well as the cause of his ungenerous treatment. He could hear their imprecations and their oaths, and his heart was racked with anguish when he thought that his daughter was in their power (for he knew nothing of her escape), and suffering the keenest distress at being forcibly detained from her parent and protector. Daveuport, too, occupied his mind; but when he gazed upon the corpse before him, an indefinable sensation of horror made him tremble, for he feared that the young man had indeed become a murderer.

The sentinel at the door had been relieved by a comrade, whose rolling eye and vain attempts at the perpendicular bespoke that contented state of inebriety, in which the individual enjoys a firm conviction that there is not a more acute or more sensible fellow in existence. The farmer cautiously watched the trooper, with the full intent of seizing the first opportunity of grappling with him, and, trusting to the effects of intoxication, to hold an advantage, and to effect a retreat; but though evidently affected with strong drink, the well-disciplined soldier never for one

moment neglected the duty of his post, but seemed perfectly aware of the responsibility of his station.

Suddenly a burst of flame issued from that part of the house where the storeroom was situated, and so rapid was its progress amidst the dry and combustible materials, as in the course of a short time to envelope the whole building in one mass of fire. The farmer very soon became sensible of his danger, and endeavoured to point it out to the guard that was placed over him; but every effort to induce him to remove without the serjeant's orders, or until regularly relieved, was ineffectual.

"This is madness!" exclaimed the farmer. "The flames will soon surround us, and then retreat will be impossible."

"It may be madness," said the man, with the utmost composure, "but it is duty; and it never shall be said that one of Charles's Royals shrunk from his post, because a cat had her whiskers singed."

"But you will sacrifice my life with your own," remonstrated the farmer.

"And that's duty, too," replied the man. "If it were not for you, I should not stand here to be roasted."

"Cannot you have the same eye upon me, if away from this threatening destruction?" inquired the farmer.

"That is not for me to decide," replied the dragoon. "I relieved the man who was placed here by the sergeant, with orders not to quit the post, nor to allow any one to pass out or in at this door; and here I shall show how well one, at least, of the Royals has been taught his discipline."

The farmer felt all his old energies as a soldier revive within him; and observing that the sabre of the lieutenant still hung suspended at his side, he determined to make himself master of it, and either to cut his way through impediment, or die in the attempt. He carelessly approached the body, but

the sentry seemed to be aware of his design; for the farmer heard the peculiar sound which is emitted by the cocking of a firelock, and turning round, saw the trooper presenting his carbine directly at him.

"Recover arms!" exclaimed the farmer, in a tone of military command; and, by a sort of mechanical impulse, the dragoon obeyed. "Have you orders to shoot me?" inquired Phillips.

"No, master," returned the sentinel; "only I don't like secrets with the dead. The lieutenant would not lend you the weapon if he was alive,—for it has done him some service, and was a bit of a favourite; and now he cannot help himself, I do not see any just cause why it should be taken from him. But you seem to know the word of command; old Stanhope couldn't have done it better. 'Recover arms,' say you? Yes, master, I'll take care you don't recover the lieutenant's arms."

The farmer wrung his hands. "My child! my child!" he exclaimed; "O God! protect her."

The dense smoke came pouring into the apartment, so as nearly to obscure the light of the lamp, and the dry oak panels were cracking with the burning heat. Sometimes flakes of flame darted through the passages, and the crashing of the falling roof, in various parts, came fearfully upon the ear, whilst a liquid stream of fire flowed uncontrolled along the ground, to the great astonishment of the farmer, who could not comprehend the phenomenon. Still the trooper retained his post unmoved, except when he saw the fiery lava, which he touched with the point of his sabre, and then applied it to his tongue. "That was a pretty piece of brandy, master," said he. "I thought they would visit it too often. It is a shame such excellent stuff should be playing at snap-dragon in this fashion." A vivid flame darted across him at this moment, so as to scorch his face; but he merely shook his head, and continued, "The rats will have warm work of it to-night."

"But they have shelter to creep to," answered the desponding farmer, "whilst I, and perhaps my child, are perishing in the flames."

"Never take it to heart, master," returned the dragoon; "for my part I can see but little difference in what element a man may die. By all accounts, you were destined to make your expiation in the air; but now it seems you will be purified in the fire, and the hangman will lose his fee. I grieve, however," he continued, turning to the remains of the unfortunate lieutenant, "that the corpse will not be buried with military honours. Poor Wharton! both friends and enemies will miss him; but hark!" he suddenly exclaimed, as the sergeant's voice was indistinctly heard, commanding him to quit his post, and bring the prisoner with him; "that is what I call a forlorn hope. Come, good Mr. Acres, we may now depart." He was preparing to go, but looking at the dead body, vociferated, "Halt! You must carry out the officer, seeing that he is unable to use his own discretion,—if he ever had any when out of the saddle."

The farmer unhesitatingly raised the cumbrous burthen, rightly considering that, heavy as it was, it would shield him from the flames; and, with the bloody corpse upon his shoulders, he followed the dragoon. But the man was a stranger to the turnings of the building, and soon became confused in the midst of the dense and suffocating vapour.

"Halt!" he exclaimed; "I am somewhat bewildered in these fastnesses, good governor, and must be beholden to your guidance. Give me the officer;—but first of all, let me have your parole of honour that you will not attempt to quit me, or we quarter where we are."

"I have nothing to fear," replied Phillips, "but my daughter's safety, and I will pledge my word that I will not leave you. You shall find me as rigid as yourself in discipline."

"Well said, old gentleman," continued the dragoon; "I begin to have a liking for you. That 'Recover arms!' was so natural. You've seen more fields, I'm thinking, than those turned up by your plough. But no matter; cross fingers with me, and swear." The farmer complied. "Now, hand over the lieutenant." He received the inanimate body, and then added,—"Take my carbine and my sabre—honour bright, you know—and forward!"

Well acquainted as the farmer was with every passage throughout the building, he was now so blinded with heat and smoke, as scarcely to be able to distinguish his way. Several times had he been driven back by the burning ruins falling across his path, and he almost despaired of reaching a place of safety; when he felt his arm firmly grasped, and a voice, which he knew to be Davenport's, audibly whispered, "Your daughter is secure; be silent, and I will lead you to her."

"Charles!" replied the farmer, "I fear there is blood upon your head, and yonder is your victim."

"I will not deny it," returned the highwayman; "but this is no time for explanation. It is I that have brought this evil, and I have sworn to rescue you or perish."

"Holloa! good governor," exclaimed the trooper, "this place is like the infernal regions. Are you conversing with a familiar?"

"No, no," replied the farmer; "it is a friend, who will guide us from this scene of horrors. Charles," he added in a lower tone, "my oath has been pledged to this man that I will not desert him; he has placed his life within my power, and I will die before I will break my faith."

"There is no need for either, sir," said Bracey; "leave him to me. Hilloa, comrade!" he cried, seizing the dragoon in his powerful grasp, "you are now my prisoner. Nay, no struggling; the odds are terribly against you, and if you quietly surrender,

not a hair of your head shall be injured. But quick, quick; the moments are precious."

"'Tis the fortune of war," sighed the dragoon; "I surrender; but as for the hair of my head, you say rightly enough, for scarcely a single hair is left to injure,—all scorched off, and one of Charles's Royals will be compelled to wear a wig. Now march in double quick time, if you please, for I am afraid we shall lose the lieutenant, after all."

Bracey speedily retraced the path by which he had gained access, and the trio, with the corpse of the officer, were soon secure from the raging element in the underground vaults of the abbey. After passing through several circuitous passages, they came to an extensive cavern, where the pure air of heaven gained a ready admission; and here the farmer found himself clasped in the arms of his beloved, yet erring child.

The dragoon stared with astonishment, and then exclaimed, "Remember, old gentleman, you are still my prisoner."

"No, no," replied Bracey; "there has been a rescue, and you are now a captive to me."

"Prove it," said the trooper, carefully laying the body of the officer upon a rocky projection, that partly divided the cavern into distinct apartments. "I'm far from being unreasonable, if you establish the thing according to the rules of war."

"Are we friends or enemies?" inquired Bracey. "If friends, then there can be no need of captures on either side; if enemies, the strongest must hold his own."

"That's rightly argued," replied the dragoon, "but not exactly to the point; for on the pledge of this old man's word, I gave him up my carbine; he will not deny it, if he has any honour."

"I do not mean to deny it," said the farmer; "what you utter is the truth."

"Well, then, I ought to have my arms again," con-

tinued the soldier, "if it were only to deliver them up to the conqueror as a prize."

"The conqueror, as you call him, has already got them," replied Bracey impatiently; "and as for the farmer, the rescue was not of his own seeking. He has kept his faith with you, and you are now my prisoner."

"I cannot exactly comprehend it," said the dragoon, quietly seating himself near the body of poor Wharton; "but give me a few minutes, and I will turn it over in my mind."

"Charles," said the farmer, as he pressed his daughter to his heart, "I feel that it is to you I am indebted for the safety of my child."

"Rather," returned Bracey, "it is I that owe my life to her; for she it was who led me through the ~~many~~ ^{most} way, and long ere this I should have been glared of the flames, hence; but when I saw the red heaven, I instantly returned, tinged the expanse of than language can express in being more happy instrument of snatching my benefactor from this fury."

"It was gallantly done," said the soldier, as if speaking to himself, and still quietly maintaining his position; "but the whole affair puzzles me extremely; there appears to be neither garrison nor forces, and yet I am a prisoner."

"Cannot you dismiss him, Charles?" inquired Joan. "You will promise, soldier, not to betray us, if you are allowed to join your comrades?"

The soldier's eye glistened for a moment, but he shook his head, and then resumed his quiet posture.

"He will never give a pledge he does not purpose to redeem," said Bracey. "I know the Royals too well to suppose that any regard for personal convenience, or individual safety, would induce one of them to sacrifice his duty." The soldier bowed his head in token of acquiescence. "And you brave fellow

there,"—pointing to the corpse,—“was the most generous and daring spirit amongst them all. May a curse alight upon the wretch whose coward soul betrayed him to his death!”

“So honest a prayer deserves a hearty amen,” slowly articulated the trooper. “But it increases the mystery to hear you, who hold me in your keeping as a prisoner, speak thus of my officer. There is certainly some mistake, or you would never have cursed the man who shot him.”

“Nor did I,” returned Bracey; “it was his companion hither that I meant; though,” he added, with bitterness in his expression, “I owe nothing to Lieutenant Wharton; unless, indeed,” he continued, baring his arm to the shoulder, and showing a bullet-wound covered with coagulated blood, “the small debt that is placed to his account here.”

“I see, I see,” said the dragoon, “among the wound carelessly; “tis them any day. But that is I’d swear to, and we have only fired at the devil, or frond’ of his corps, on this night, at all events. Yet, young man, you might have been accidentally in the way; for carbines are not like gilded cards, that give long warning of a visitor’s approach.”

Bracey smiled in scorn, and hastily pulled down his sleeve as Joan approached him, with an infuriated flash of vengeance in her eyes. “You are wounded, Charles,” said she; “and was it yon remnant of perishing mortality that fired?”

“No, young woman,” replied the trooper, “he had only pistols. But look yourself, if the man will let you; it is a carbine-wound, and I will swear to it.”

“He gave the word of command,” said Bracey; “but I must admit it was not without provocation. Yet I deeply regret that my aim should in this instance have been so true;”—the soldier fixed his eye upon the speaker—“the shot was designed for Ben-

son, but if this piece (holding up the carbine) can reach him, he shall have it yet."

"Nay, nay, Charles," remonstrated the farmer, "shed no more blood,"—the trooper became restless,—"there has been too much shed already. But say, why did Benson single you out for his persecution? His enmity was levelled at the outlaw Bracey."

"And Bracey stands before you!" exclaimed the determined man; "concealment now were worse than useless."

The farmer's eye became glazed and fixed, as he recoiled with horror and amazement from the robber's side. Joan stood unmoved, but not so the trooper. He made a sudden, yet firm spring upon the highwayman, and wound his strong arms about his body, exclaiming, "I am in the hands of plunderers, then, and the laws of war are not required. Now devil, or Bracey, hold thine own."

Desperate grew the struggle between these powerful opponents, for Bracey had dropped the carbine, and it was mere muscular strength that could decide the contest. Firmly grasping each other's limbs, they planted their broad feet upon the rock, and, for a few minutes, seemed like exquisite statues, models for the sculptor's art; whilst their eyes gleamed with a fierce fury, yet fixed with a resolute and deadly meaning, evincing a determination that one of them must, ere long, be stretched by the side of the lifeless corpse.

Suddenly a bright flash, like the glare of the red lightning, streamed from the projecting rock where the dead body of the officer was extended, and a report, like the rolling thunder when it shakes turret and spire, echoed through the vaults, whilst a dense vapour arose above the corpse:—the dragoon's hold relaxed, and Bracey dashed him to the earth.

"Your aim was excellent, my Joan," exclaimed Bracey, "and your intrepidity has once more saved me."

The trooper raised himself up, and sat upon the rocky floor; the blood streamed from a wound in his breast, to which he applied his hand, and then raising it to his face, he smeared it with the vital current, and rendered the spectacle truly horrible. He had heard the observation of Bracey, and extending his hand to the carbine, which lay within reach of where he had fallen, observed, "It is a pretty piece, this; and the wench deserves one of the Royals for a husband, she fired so well. But eh!—how's this?"—he glanced his eye upon the lock, which still remained upon the half cock, and throwing open the pan,—
"the priming is untouched." A ghastly grin sat upon his features, as he instantly closed it again, full cocked the lock, raised the butt of the carbine to his shoulder, and pointed the muzzle toward the retreating Bracey. But at this instant a figure darted from the projecting rock and struck the dragoon upon the breast, who dropped the carbine, uttered a deep groan, and with a convulsive shudder fell at full length along the ground.

"It has split his heart!" exclaimed a terrific-looking being, who stood erect, brandishing a reeking blade above the expiring soldier, and grimly smiling at his quivering agony. The voice was human, but the figure, enveloped in skins and tattered clothes, seemed too repulsive to hold communion with mankind. His shaggy and matted hair resembled the mane of the bristly boar, and his haggard features were nearly concealed by bushy whiskers, extending on each side of his face, and meeting in greater profusion at his throat; his feet were unshod, his legs were destitute of covering, and as he gazed at his prostrate victim, he seemed like a demon exulting in the pride of unearthly power. "It has split his heart," said he, "and the steel has done better duty than the pistol."

"Many thanks, my brave Jefferies," returned the highwayman; "it was you, then, that fired. You

have, indeed, performed *that* service which I never will forget."

"What need of talking," answered the uncouth figure; "I am your debtor, not only for myself, but also for those who call me father. Your bounty has preserved me, when perishing with hunger. Your hand has rescued me when the proud oppressor would have crushed me down——"

"This act has well repaid for all," replied Bracey, interrupting him.

"The debt is not yet cancelled," exclaimed the man; "your life is still in jeopardy, and——"

"I fear them not," said Bracey; "and but for the persuasions of one who is inestimably precious to me, I would have braved the assault."

"For the sake of that one," said Joan, "let discretion temper courage. We have escaped the flames, but how can we avoid the consequences of the spectacle which is now before us? Oh, those dying agonies are dreadful!"

The body of the expiring trooper lay extended at full length, and his strong spirit still kept struggling to retain possession of its ruined citadel; but nature had abandoned the works, the powers of death gradually assumed the conquest, and in a few minutes claimed the triumph,—for the fitful fever of life was over. The farmer seemed petrified with the awful responsibility of his situation. He had given shelter to a robber and a murderer; and the conviction that his only child was devoted to the outlaw added bitterness to the misery which overwhelmed his heart. He had seen the home of his old age devoured by the flames, and a fearful death upon the scaffold was present to his mind. In vain he looked abroad for one hope to which he could cling; in vain he looked within for the slightest consolation—all was dark, and deep, and horrible despair. He raised his hand as if commanding silence, but his tongue refused its office; he wildly gazed upon the surrounding objects, as if

expressive of a wish to speak, but no utterance beyond a heavy groan was heard. The fierce glare of a maniac was in his eye; and suddenly starting from the spot with the superhuman speed which madness lent, he rushed towards the burning ruins.

Bracey instantly followed his once generous and kind-hearted patron, but soon afterwards returned alone, and Joan read in his countenance, that the efforts to overtake her father had been ineffectual, and she was indeed a desolate orphan in the world. At this moment, all the attributes of feminine gentleness seemed to depart from her. She looked at the outlaw as upon a fiend who had meshed his snares about her soul, and from whom there was no prospect of escape. Yet she clung to him with desperate energy, as if there existed no other being upon earth to rescue her from the lonely desolation she had caused. The love, which had at first swelled her bosom, was more powerful than ever; but circumstances had changed its character from that high-wrought feeling which innocence inspires, till it now resembled the worship which the minor spirits of darkness are supposed to pay to the prince of the powers of the air. She tried to pray, but her petitions were smothered in her breast; she would have cursed, but the malediction died away in the utterance; and from that hour she firmly devoted herself to the control and will of her destroyer.

The highwayman gently took her arm within his own, and leaving Jefferies with the bodies, he led her to the place where he had left his horse. Only a few minutes elapsed before both were mounted, and on their way from the scene of horrors. When they had reached the summit of the hill, Joan cast her eyes back upon the home of her early years. In some parts the fire was still raging; whilst in others, having destroyed all within its reach, it had sunk down into a sullen and blackened smoke. The forms of the soldiers and the servants could be distinctly

seen in the blaze; and as they moved about, the red hue streamed upon their bodies, presenting to the mind of the bewildered girl some faint resemblance to that place of torment, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched. Alas! she carried the self-same worm within her own breast, and the fire which lighted her to evil was never, never extinguished. She thought of her father perishing in the devouring flames, and thrilling agony had well-nigh deprived her of strength to hold her seat. The robber felt the trembling emotion of her frame, and firmly sustained her in that trying hour. They passed the brow of the hill, and Joan bade an eternal farewell to that spot she ~~was~~ never to behold again.

CHAPTER VII.

“He hath done that to spite me ;
Let him look to ’t.”

WHEN the sergeant found the house was actually in flames, he lost no time in collecting his men together ; but this was far from being an easy task, as the copious draughts they had taken from the brandy-cask had rendered some of them extremely oblivious, and others, notwithstanding the great hazard of the undertaking, still attempted to brave the fiery element, that they might take a long farewell of such a pleasant companion as the *eau-de-vie*. But the spirit began to escape, and soon caught the flames, producing that blazing stream of lava which had so much astonished the farmer.

Benson, in a high state of intoxication, had again and again searched every part of the building for Joan ; but, unable to discover where she was concealed, he joined the men upon the lawn in a state bordering upon frenzy. Here he ranged from one to another, making inquiries which were but little attended to ; but in the midst of his incoherency he suddenly recollected the farmer, and demanded where he was. Macallister had forgotten the prisoner, or rather, he expected that the corporal had issued directions for his safety ; but finding neither the farmer nor the sentry amongst the assembled group, he returned to the burning pile, and entering as far as safety would allow, called to the dragoon to bring out his prisoner. No voice was heard in reply—for it will be remembered the trooper did not answer to the call—and attempts were made to penetrate still further

into the blazing mass ; but the passage was now so completely choked, that all endeavours at ingress were necessarily abandoned, and the soldiers had the additional disgrace of supposing that a comrade, as well as the body of their officer, had become a sacrifice to the fury of the flames, which seemed to exult over the agonies of human victims. Added to this, the man whom they had been sent to apprehend had escaped, and no doubts remained upon their minds that the farmer, with his daughter, had perished in the ruins of their dwelling.

Benson, drunk as he was, could not but look upon the spectacle with a horror and dismay that served in some measure to sober him, especially as the neighbouring villages had become alarmed, and the peasantry thronged to the scene of the conflagration. The servants of the farmer were not backward in pointing out Benson as the cause of all the mischief, which they asserted had its origin in jealousy of Davenport ; and the hardy tillers of the soil heard, with ill-repressed indignation, that the benevolent old farmer, the beautiful Joan and the generous Charles, had all perished in the burning wreck.

Amongst the rest, Jefferies, who had been early on the spot, listened most attentively to the detail, and hastily withdrew. In advancing up the avenue, he had found the pistol of the lieutenant, which had been lost in his fall, and concealing it beneath his tattered garment, he entered the secret recesses of the underground vaults. Scarcely had he reached the cavern, in which our last chapter discovered him, than the sound of voices made him hide himself behind the projection, from which he had fired at the dragoon, and afterwards sprang forth to stab him to the heart.

The peasantry were soon enabled to take advantage of the intoxicated troopers, and missiles flew in every direction. In vain Benson urged his magisterial capacity ; the infuriated populace saw only the

desolation he had caused, and pressed hard to hurl him into the glowing ashes that had consumed their friends.

The sergeant drew up his party, and they mounted their frightened animals. The heavy sabres of the dragoons glistened fearfully, as the bright light flashed upon them, and they charged upon the gathering crowd, which hastily retreated at their approach, but instantly rallied on the soldiers returning to the lawn.

Daybreak began to streak the eastern horizon, when Jefferies once more appeared amongst them, and found himself surrounded by about a hundred of the boldest husbandmen from miles around.

"Why stand ye lingering here," he exclaimed, "with these bloodhounds full in view? Are ye men?—are ye husbands—fathers—freemen? Your cottages are doomed. Your wives and children must crouch to the armed hand. Up! up! and be doing! Seize each a blazing brand, and on to the manor-farm. As Benson has meted out, so do ye measure to him again."

A wild shout of applause arose, as the determined band tore down the burning rafters from one of the out-buildings, and in a compact body, headed by the mendicant, they quitted the abbey.

"On! on! to the manor-farm!" echoed from rock to rock, and smote fearfully upon Benson's ears. With dreadful apprehension he heard the loud cry mingled with execrations on his name, and his heart sunk within him.

"There is mischief amongst those fellows," he exclaimed to the sergeant; "they are not aware that imperative duty, nay, self-defence, has forced me hither. The fire was mere accident, but I must suffer for the whole. They threaten to destroy my house. Sergeant, we must prevent this. Come, my brave fellow, you will follow me, and save my property from ruin."

"I am not aware, sir," replied the sergeant, "what orders my officer received."

"They are here, sergeant," said Benson, at the same time displaying a piece of paper. "Here, read them yourself."

Macallister took the paper, which purported to be an order to Lieutenant Wharton, "to follow the directions of Nathaniel Benson, Esq., a magistrate for the county of Northampton, employed in apprehending a declared and avowed traitor to our sovereign lord the king."

"It is correct," said the sergeant, "and is countersigned by Colonel Stanhope. I am read to obey."

"Put your men in motion, then," hastily rejoined the squire; "lose not a moment, but follow me." He dashed his spurs into the sides of his steed, and darted down the avenue.

"Forward!" cried the sergeant, and the dragoons, upon the full gallop, followed in the rear of Benson; so that when daylight opened on the scene, only a few villagers, with the domestics, remained as witnesses to the desolation.

The abbey, which the night before looked proud in the grandeur of old age, was in many places levelled with the ground; and in other parts, only the blackened shell remained to tell what it once had been. The sun had set upon the grey turret and the moss-crowned battlement; but his early beams at rising faintly gleamed upon their mouldering ruins. Outbuildings, stacks, implements of agriculture, partly burnt or still burning—all presented melancholy proofs of the ravages made by the destroying flames.

Jeffries had no serious intention of firing the manor-farm, but he had shrewdly hit upon the best method to induce Benson to withdraw the troopers from the abbey. Finding his purpose accomplished, he divided his party; and whilst one half proceeded to the manor-farm (which he knew would be safely

guarded by the dragoons), the other half, with himself, returned to the abbey to search among the ruins, and save what they could get. The manoeuvre had the desired effect; for whilst the party of peasantry which had marched to Benson's kept the Royals in full vigilance in that quarter, his own band went on with their labour unmolested, till a heavy fall of snow, towards the close of day, compelled them to seek their cottages; and scarcely one that had been employed returned unrewarded for his toil by some article or other which he had found amongst the ashes. The domestics also took shelter with the cottagers from the inclemency of the weather.

Colonel Stanhope expressed some surprise that he had received no information from the detachment under Wharton (for the sergeant, seeing the determined hostility of the peasantry, deemed it most prudent not to trust a messenger to their fury; and the dread of Benson lest the farm should be attacked, made him act to the full extent of his commission in keeping the dragoons with him), especially as strange reports had been brought into the town respecting the conflagration; he therefore issued orders that an officer, with an equal party to the last, should repair to the spot, so as to reach it by daybreak.

The lieutenant appointed to this duty was a boon companion of Wharton's, and he felt much gratified at the thoughts of joining his friend in an employment that was calculated to break the dull monotony of country quarters; whilst the dragoons felt careless as to the result, so that the object in view promised them some degree of activity. Daylight saw them sweeping through the avenue upon the full trot; but when they halted upon the lawn, the spectacle was of that appalling nature, that even the stout hearts of the lieutenant and his men were quailed before it.

The snow had continued to fall heavily during the night, and greatly aided in extinguishing the fire,

which had long since spent its fury, though the blackening smoke still curled its head upwards towards heaven; and when the freshening breeze swept over the dying embers, it would rekindle them to a bright glow, and not unfrequently a fierce flame would ascend, till it was stifled amidst the dense and smothering vapour.

Nearly in the centre of this scene of devastation was an elevated mound of stones and rubbish, which had been heaped together in their fall, and on which the fire had long ceased to exert its strength. The dark-brown smoke arose in heavy flakes around; but as the wind occasionally whirled it away in circling eddies, a human being was seen sitting, or rather crouching upon this mound, apparently insensible to every object which surrounded him. The falling snow and the early morning gave him a gigantic appearance; and his head and part of his body were exposed to the winter's storm, and his eyes were fixed upon two dark objects which lay stretch before him. But language would fail to describe the horror and amazement of the dragoons, when, as the light of day rendered vision more clear and distinct, they recognized the dress of their own regiment, and beheld the lifeless bodies of Wharton and the sentry. The living man heeded not their approach; his long white hair fluttered in the wind above a countenance which had been struck by sudden madness, and every feature was distorted into a look of settled, lasting despair:—it was Farmer Phillips. How he had been saved, as well as the manner of removing the dead bodies, must rest upon conjecture; but there he sat, a terrific spectacle to look upon.

The lieutenant lost no time in ordering the remains of his brave companion and the dragoon to be removed. A light waggon was spread with such loose straw as they could gather, and the remnants of frail mortality were deposited in it. The wretched maniac had also been secured; but he

contrived, whilst the troopers were occupied, to steal away, and on search being made, he was nowhere to be found.

Some of the cattle belonging to the farm were harnessed to the waggon, and a sergeant with six men were directed to escort the bodies to head-quarters; whilst the lieutenant (having obtained information of Macallister's position from the peasantry) pursued his way to the manor-farm. Here the mystery was in some measure explained, and leaving four men for Benson's protection, he returned towards Northampton, and joined the mournful procession just on the outskirts of the town.

Wharton had been a general favourite in the regiment, and the intelligence of his death operated with full effect on the rugged hearts of the soldiery. The most rigid inquiry was instituted by Colonel Stanhope; but both Benson and Macallister had their reasons for not being too explicit, and the whole affair seemed wrapped in inextricable obscurity. Parties were sent out in every direction to try and gain intelligence of Davenport and Miss Phillips, but without avail; and they were at length supposed to have perished in the ruins.

Colonel Stanhope collected every possible particular of the transaction, which was forwarded to the Lord Keeper Guilford, and Phillips was attainted of high-treason,—not in the character of the veteran farmer, but as Major Phillips the republican leader; who not appearing to take his trial, his lands were confiscated to the crown.

The conduct of Benson had rendered him so obnoxious to the peasantry, that his life was frequently exposed to danger, and the neighbouring farmers, despising what they deemed his bitter malignity, avoided him both in the market and in the field; so that at last he was compelled to dispose of his estate and retire into another county, where he was unknown. Thus did the spirit of revenge, united to a

short-sighted policy, produce its own punishment. The manor-farm passed into other hands; but the name of its former possessor was seldom mentioned without execration.

The blackened ashes of the abbey were scattered by the winds; the huge stones which had once formed the proud edifice were conveyed away to make fences, or to construct smaller buildings; and, in the course of a short time, the spot was pointed at merely as one that had been the theatre of a deed of blood.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Thus when some fond bosom affects to distraction,
An object unworthy its care or its love,
It moves with delight round the fatal attraction :
Though to stay is to die, still 'tis death to remove."

It was nearly four years after the events at the abbey, and the city of Bristol resounded with the fame of a celebrated beauty, who, with her husband, kept a large inn about a mile distant on the road towards Bath. In age she seemed not to have passed more than twenty summers ; and the brilliancy of her wit, as well as her accomplishments, gave indications of a far superior education than was merely necessary for the station which she occupied. Her manners were extremely fascinating, and when added to the loveliness of her person, they linked a chain of slavery round the young and ardent mind ; whilst the more advanced in years either withdrew from the influences of her extraordinary beauty, or, under the hope of basking in the smiles of her favour, committed numerous extravagancies that rendered them truly ridiculous.

Many were the suitors who wooed the fair hostess with dishonourable love, and not a few paid severely both in person and in purse for attempting to seduce her from the allegiance of wedded duty. Alas ! they knew not that what they foolishly imagined to be the mere simplicity of nature, was the result of long-studied art ; they were not aware that the beauteous enchantress decoyed them to her snares, that she and her husband might batten on the spoil. Wives mourned the negligence of those who had sworn fidelity at the altar ; and many a bright eye became

dimmed with tears at the breach of plighted faith in hearts they had loved so tenderly.

The husband of this woman possessed a form of nature's boldest modelling. He was handsome, daring, and vigorous; obliging and attentive in his business, yet repulsive to the intruder whose approaches assumed familiarity. But kind to the poor, and generous as a master, all were desirous of serving him, though there was at times an impetuosity in his manner that made his dependants tremble.

The idlers of the inn-yard had assembled, at the close of a summer day, to pass their coarse jokes, and share the nut-brown ale near the stable doors. Merriment and laughter prevailed amidst the sneer and the jest, when a man, with repelling features and arrayed in a motley garb, entered the gates, accompanied by one whose age and whose appearance were calculated to command respect. The first of the two was robust, and rather disgusting to the eye; and the latter, stricken with years, tottered on his staff, and seemed totally abstracted from what was passing before his eyes.

"Ah! what, my sturdy man of rags, is it you?" exclaimed a postboy, who had come in from Oxford. "It is many a day since I saw you last. And who is this mummer you have with you? Always in mountebank, old Jefferies, eh?"

The mendicant gave the man a scornful scowl, but it instantly passed away, as he replied, "Poverty may be quickly found, but is never sought after. Old age comes of itself, whether we will or no."

"Come, bar all that preaching," returned the other. "You haven't been among the gowusmen lately, Jef, if we may guess from your wardrobe; but perhaps the old song is right after all," and he commenced singing,

"Of all the trades in England, a beggar's is the best,
For when he does get weary, he lays him down to rest.

So a-begging we will go, we'll go, we'll go;

So a-begging we will go."

"Isn't that it, old man, eh?"

"A-begging we will go, we'll go, we'll go;
So a-begging we will go."

In singing the last lines, the young man, taking advantage of the quiet demeanour of the mendicant, had seized his aged companion by the hands, and, to the great amusement of all present, affected to dance with him. But their mirth was of short duration; for the sturdy Jefferies raised his sinewy arm, and dealt so severe a blow, that the aggressor was instantly stretched at his feet.

Tumult would have arisen, and several rushed forward to resent the downfall of their companion, who, springing up, placed himself in an attitude for boxing. "A ring! a ring!" was loudly shouted on all sides, and the gathering crowds began to spread themselves into a circular form; when the mendicant suddenly removed the broad-flapped hat of his venerable associate, and as the thin, long, snow-white covering of the head was exposed to view, he exclaimed, "Respect gray hairs!"

The old man stood apparently unconscious of all that was passing, except by a sort of mournful noise expressive of uneasiness; and when the surrounding throng gazed on his time and toil-worn features, with that sudden transition so peculiarly characteristic of the lower orders of Englishmen, they at once acknowledged the punishment was just, and sided with the unappalled Jefferies; who, leading his companion away from the crowd, both sat down on a bench in the yard.

They had not taken their station many minutes, and order was once more restored, when a loud shriek was heard proceeding from one of the windows of the inn, and the landlord was perceived holding his fainting wife in his arms. Jefferies looked towards the spot with apathetic indifference; but, on witnessing the

spectacle, he suddenly started up from his seat, and his countenance assumed a deep and intense expression, whilst his distorted features were rendered more repulsive by his hideous laugh. In a few moments the pair quitted the yard, the window was closed, and the stable-lads, gathering together, made the occurrence the subject of their conversation.

The landlord conveyed his distracted partner to her chamber, and learned from her incoherent expressions sufficient to make him acquainted with the cause of her distress. He then hastened to the inn-yard, and inquired for the mendicant, but he was gone no one knew whither. With hasty and irregular step he paced to and fro at the front of the house, till twilight shed its deepending shades upon the earth. Amidst its doubtful gloom the tall gaunt figure of Jefferies was seen approaching, and the landlord heard a well-remembered voice implore his charity.

"Joan was then right," exclaimed the supplicated; "and you are my preserver, Jefferies."

"I told you the debt was not yet cancelled," replied the other in an under-voice; "but did she recognize no other person?"

"She did," returned the landlord, "and would have rushed into his arms, but your prudence, my worthy Jefferies, defeated her intent. Is the old man safe?"

"Perfectly so," answered the mendicant; "but his reason is as dark as the underground vaults which first benighted it. You will remember the circumstance, I believe."

"I do, I do," returned the landlord; "but I little thought he had survived that hour of bitterness and horror. However, it is too late to play the schoolboy now; the dice are in the box, and, precarious as is the throw, I must abide the issue. Here is gold for you, Jefferies; procure the farmer fitting lodging. I must go to his daughter, and tell her of our interview. Change your appearance, Jefferies; get other clothes, and when the sun has set to-morrow—you

see yon tall majestic oak that towers above the stream—there will I meet you both.”

“ ’Tis like yourself,” said the mendicant, fingering the gold; “the purse is heavy, but there are others who must claim my care.”

“Are they with you?” inquired the landlord.

“No,” replied the mendicant, in a tone of bitterness, “they are distant; but the affections of a father are equally as powerful in the poor man’s breast as in the rich—though the latter deem ours the mere instinct of a sort of rational animal, rather than the solicitude of parental anxiety.”

“Jefferies!” exclaimed the landlord, “do you, too, doubt me? In whom then can I confide?”

“Nay, nay,” replied the other, “doubt never crossed my mind where you were concerned. I only wished to revive your recollections, and now I am satisfied. My children have too often eaten of the bread of your providing, for suspicion to lurk in my heart; and what greater security can you have than the dread of my own ignominious end?”

“Yet you might purchase your own pardon,” answered the landlord, glancing his keen eye upon the mendicant, “by betraying the outlaw Bracey.”

“Never!” forcibly ejaculated the beggar; “was there nothing else, the good old cause would prevent it. What! have I stood by your father’s side in many a bloody field to right old England’s liberty, that I should betray his son? No, no; it is impossible.”

“Enough!” returned the landlord; “you will remember—yon oak, and the twilight hour. Those whom you love shall be provided for; ’tis Bracey tells you so, or rather ’tis the last remnant of him who was your early friend. But haste! persons are coming this way;—remember the oak-tree!”

The mendicant bowed his head as the party advanced, and in a feigned voice implored blessings on his benefactor for the charitable donation he had

received. It was given in the usual cant of the begging fraternity, and he then walked away to fulfil the landlord's directions.

The beautiful hostess still remained in her chamber, to conceal the agitation which the sight of the aged man had caused, and thither the landlord now hastened to join her.

"It was—it was my father!" she hastily exclaimed, as he entered; "changed as he is, a daughter's heart could never be deceived. I, too, am changed—fearfully, dreadfully changed! You cannot tell the agony which such a spectacle has caused. Why does he live!—why does he appear again! To curse his child? It were better that his head was now at rest within the quiet mansions of the tomb."

"Suppress this wild emotion, Joan," gently remonstrated the landlord; "your father is in a place of safety, and well provided for."

"But I must see him," she answered, "must tell him of his daughter's love. His daughter's love? No; I left him in the burning pile to perish! I abandoned my parent in his declining years! Yet, Charles, you told me he was dead. Oh! the sight of me would be as a blight upon his mind, and I should hear his curse—the curse of a broken-hearted father—ringing in my ears! How was he saved?"

"That I have yet to learn," replied the landlord; "but you have nothing to fear from his reproaches, for the light of reason is extinguished."

Joan, shuddering, exclaimed, "To him, then, idiocy is bliss! But who has quenched that spark which glowed so brightly in his soul? I am the guilty wretch! They say that I have beauty: so has the panther in his glossy skin, but treacherous cruelty lurks within his heart! Yes! let them search mine, and what will it be found?"

"This is downright folly, Joan," returned the landlord, "and may produce the most disastrous results. However, be it as you wish; you know I

am prepared. Yet I would meet my fate from any hand but yours."

She laughed hysterically, and her lovely features assumed the demoniac expression of a fallen angel as she uttered, "What! like the Indian at the stake, must I endure the torture with a placid countenance, and smile on my tormentors? Cannot *you* bear with me a few short minutes, when the bitter anguish of my spirit overflows its measure? Oh, my heart would break—it would burst, if it did not find some vent."

"Let me entreat you to calm this agitation," implored the landlord. "I know the sight of your father must have revived in your memory scenes I could have wished forgotten; but remember how necessary it is to be concealed,—it is the issue of life or death, my Joan. A short time hence we may retire from the world, and pass the remainder of our days in sweet enjoyment. Do not, then, risk the prospect, when it may soon be realized! Control yourself, my love; your father shall be our mutual care, and we may yet smooth his passage to the grave."

"You guide me as you will," replied Joan, "and I yield to your directions; yet I would again urge you to quit this place as speedily as possible. There is wealth sufficient to procure more than the necessities of life for all. And oh! my very soul longs for the peaceful solitude of some sequestered spot, where the heart may find the balm of consolation. I have been, and still am yours, Charles,—devotedly yours, amidst every temptation."

"I know and feel your worth," acknowledged Bracey; "otherwise I should not have exposed you to such dangerous society. But, Joan, may I not take some credit to myself as not being wholly despicable in person?"

"Too fatally you may," returned the hostess reproachfully. "But have you yet to learn that, as the continual dashing of the waves smooths down the

rugged surface of the rock, so fidelity often assailed, the heart is less capable of resistance? Can the mind retain its integrity amidst debasing influences? Will that bosom continue pure, which even the semblance of vice contaminates? No, no, Charles; too well you know the steps to infamy and ruin are generally progressive."

A dark frown passed over the landlord's brow; but it was only for a moment. "Upbraid me as you will," replied he, "I can forgive it. I shall now leave you to cooler reflection. You may then regret these ungenerous reproaches."

"Nay, do not leave me," exclaimed the agitated woman, "do not leave me, Charles,—especially in anger. But remorse and anguish are busy in my soul, and oh, the strugglings are dreadful! Indeed, indeed, I did not mean to use reproach. Yet, if you love me, Charles—if you really love me, do not require the sacrifices I am compelled to make; but let us, in the quiet of some lonely spot, live solely for each other."

Bracey pressed her to his heart, and for a few minutes virtue was triumphant. "Your request shall be speedily complied with, my Joan," said he; "but now you must make a powerful effort to subdue emotion, lest suspicion should be excited, and, instead of the calm retreat you so ardently desire, I may yet be encompassed in the iron frame, of which you once before heard me make mention."

Joan shuddered as the horrible prospect was fearfully pictured to the imagination; and as Bracey quitted the apartment, she solemnly promised to triumph over the tortures of her heart, and—at least in outward appearance—to wear a smile upon her countenance, whatever might be passing in the deep recesses of retrospective thought.

At length the twilight hour again returned, and as the thickening shades fell heavier and heavier, Bracey and the beautiful Joan repaired to the place of

appointment. It was one of those romantic spots with which the neighbourhood of Bristol formerly abounded, and notwithstanding recent improvements, traces of them are still remaining. A gigantic oak spread its extensive branches, covering a large tract of ground of a circular form, and in one part shading a rapid stream, that bounded from rock to rock till it emptied itself into the river Avon.

Here they found the mendicant had already arrived, but greatly improved in his personal appearance; and here also, upon a mound formed by the root of the tree elevating the earth, sat the wreck of the venerable Farmer Phillips.

The sun had gone down several degrees below the western horizon, but the sky was still lighted up by his receding beams, that shed a glowing lustre upon surrounding objects. The old man's face received the bright reflection—for his hoary head was uncovered to the evening breeze—and it gave to his features that peculiar tint of hardy health which the farmer once possessed.

Joan gazed upon her father's countenance, and fell senseless on the green sward at his feet. But he heeded it not; his eye was fixed upon the rippling wave, attracted by its glistening hue from the reddened sky, whilst his child, his only child, lay inanimate before him. Bracey raised her in his arms, and the strugglings of nature in a short time restored her to recollection. Then, when she looked upon her parent, and the warm gush of tears relieved her surcharged bosom, she took her father's withering hand and pressed it in her own. She bowed her head upon his knees, and with convulsive sobbings, called upon his name. A transient gleam of recollection seemed for a moment to return. The harmonious voice of the agonized Joan, repeating those expressions of endearment which once thrilled with such exquisite delight on the farmer's soul, aroused him from his lethargy. The chord which had been so long relaxed in his

heart was once more strung to energetic feeling, and vibrated responsive to his daughter's utterance. He bent his aged head, and as his silvery locks mingled with the dark tresses of the beautiful woman, he imprinted a kiss upon her forehead; and, as was his wont when giving his nightly benediction in happier times, he feebly uttered, "Bless you, my child!"

For several minutes the pair continued motionless and undisturbed, for Bracey considered it most prudent to suffer the pleadings and yearnings of nature to have free and unrepressed liberty. But as they still remained quiescent, he gently lifted the farmer's arm: it again fell heavily by his side. He slowly raised the old man's head,—the eyes were open, but glazed and fixed—death had left an indelible impression on his brow, for Farmer Phillips was gone for ever!

Deep consternation filled the mind of Bracey, as the probable consequences of such an event passed rapidly in review before him: it seemed to be the precursor of a fate he had long contemplated; for what account could he give of the transaction, without in some measure implicating himself, and reviving in the public mind circumstances which were nearly forgotten. Joan still remained insensible, with her head reclined upon the corpse of her father. The mendicant, with folded arms, indulged in all the sympathies which nature had yet left him, and whilst gazing on the remains of his aged companion, his furrowed features were moistened by the tears which were wrung from his heart. But all this was little more than momentary—the effects of sudden and unexpected transition; and Bracey, recovering from its influence, ran to the stream, from whence he brought water and sprinkled it on the face of Joan; whilst Jefferies, more from imitation of his companion than from any hope he entertained, did the same to the farmer. The refreshing coolness revived the beautiful woman, but no earthly power could recall the

departed spirit to its frail tenement. Joan was restored to animation, but he to whom she owed her being was beyond the aid of mortal means.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed as, slowly raising herself up and parting the clustering ringlets that fell in rich profusion down her forehead, she gazed upon the outlaw. "Oh, Charles!" she continued, "are we then once more upon my father's grounds? Have we again taken up our abode at the abbey?" Her eye caught the red glare of the sky. "No, no," said she, "I remember now; there were flames—there were flames! and my father perished!" She forcibly threw herself along, as if desirous of concealing her anguish in the earth, when her head and arms rested on the body of her parent. "How—what is this?" she shrieked, as, bending her face, she recognized the features of the corpse, now calmly settled in the tranquillity of death. "Who has done this?" she wildly uttered; and, clasping the dead man to her bosom—"Charles! you could not be so vile, so cruel—yet, no—I have it now—he blessed me—blessed me with his dying breath; and, as oil to the burning pile, so will that blessing rage with a heavier curse upon my soul!"

At this moment Bracey became sensible that an addition had been made to their party, as he perceived a stranger apparently endeavouring to conceal himself on the side of the oak, opposite to the spot where they were grouped. Jefferies also caught sight of the intruder, and springing forward, clatched him in his strong grasp. It was the man whom he had struck the previous evening in the inn-yard.

"Be silent," exclaimed Jefferies in an under-tone. "Utter but a word above your breath, and your limbs shall be as motionless as the dead before you. Has revenge or curiosity brought you hither? Speak, wretch! but let it be in whispers."

"Slacken your hold upon my throat," slowly articulated the man, "or you will strangle me." Jefferies

complied; but instead of speaking low, the man instantly gave a loud shout, and the next moment five or six armed men, belonging to the civil power, surrounded them, and he was rescued.

"So, my man of rags," said the fellow in a tone of derision, "you've changed your harness, have you? It was a heavy purse the master gave you last night; for what purpose, perhaps he, or Mr. Bracey, whom you talked about, can best tell, eh? But come, officers, do your duty, and seize that branded beggar. He shall smart for the blow he gave me, and I will show him what it is to be revenged."

The party cautiously approached the mendicant, who seemed as if resigned to his fate; but suddenly springing on the foremost of the advancing men, he dashed him to the earth, and seizing his weapon, boldly attacked the whole. Bracey saw the danger of his friend, and, exerting his Herculean strength, he rushed recklessly amongst them, laying all prostrate that came within his reach. The two accomplices met with fearful odds; but their desperate energy triumphed, and the officers were compelled to retreat.

But not so the man who had been mainly instrumental to the affray. The punishment he had received on the previous night from Jefferies, had rankled in his heart. He knew something of the mendicant's early life and latter pursuits; and, connecting the shriek of the landlady with the hasty departure of the beggar and the old man from the inn-yard, he was induced, unperceived, to watch the motions of the latter two; and when Jefferies returned to the inn, after leaving his companion in a place of security, he overheard part of his conversation with the landlord. Malice and revenge prompted him to make every inquiry, and the result was, a conviction that they had been accomplices in some unlawful act, though of what nature he could not develop, and he was therefore determined to bring

them to justice. For this purpose he had applied to a magistrate, and obtained the force he had led to the spot. At the commencement of the struggle just mentioned, he had fallen under the heavy hand of the outlaw; and when the remnant of his maimed party sought for safety in flight, he, with two others, was left senseless on the ground.

"The present moment requires prompt decision," exclaimed the outlaw; "they will return with stronger force, and then our destiny is sealed."

"For myself," returned the mendicant, "death would indeed be welcome; but there are others who live upon my existence, and therefore life is worth preserving for their sakes. It is a desperate strait, but we have been in worse; and if it is to be the last,"—he added with a grin of ferocious vengeance,—“why let us do our work like men. Come,” he continued, raising the apparently inanimate body of the postillion in his arms, “a little water will refresh the miscreant who sought to betray us.”

“What are you about to do?” inquired Bracey hastily.

The mendicant, without attending to the question, approached the stream, and reached a spot down which it fell a height of several feet. He paused a moment, as he gazed upon the rushing waters; then lifting up his burthen, before Bracey, who had followed close could prevent his intention, the post-boy was dashed over the steep. The heavy body splashed as it opened the clear element that separated to receive it. There was a momentary struggle, as if the chill liquid had brought about a hasty revival of sensation, and then all was again as still as usual. In a few seconds the surface was once more troubled, and threw up its swelling bubbles as if some commotion, imperceptible to mortal eye, was passing underneath; the white foam hissed and parted, hither and thither, as it was carried along by the current; but it soon resumed its smoothness; the

tide glided on, whilst the dead slept the cold sleep of death below.

There was now a raging fierceness in the look of the mendicant—a gaze of stern desperation, which seemed to defy the worst that could befall. “He will never bear witness against us on this side of eternity,” said he, “and his revenge has fallen on himself. But there are more must bear him company, for dead men tell no tales.”

“Nay, nay,” said Bracey, “Jefferies, it must not be; I have already arranged to quit my house, and we must depart this instant. But,” he added, returning to where the beautiful Joan still reclined over the body of her father,—“but what can we do with these frail remains? Jefferies, I will immediately hasten to the inn and provide horses: darkness has spread its veil upon the earth; gain the road-side, and wait for me. Joan, we must away!”

“Have I not warned you, Charles?” mournfully uttered Joan; “but, now the moment has arrived and danger presses, you shall find me firm.”

“Reproaches are useless,” returned the outlaw; “and, believe me, my patience begins to weary of their repetition. You promise to be firm; fulfil your promise, and with every haste return with me to the house, for we must within this hour bid it farewell for ever.”

“But my father’s corpse?” said Joan, shuddering as she looked upon the body. “Is it to remain here, Charles—found and lost in the same moment?”

“Leave that to me,” exclaimed Jefferies, raising the breathless remnant of frail mortality upon his shoulder. “No time must be wasted. Hasten with your husband, and bring away whatever you can carry. I will await your coming by the stagnant pool, near where the cross-roads meet.”

“I will confide in you, Jefferies,” said Joan, “for this is a fearful hour of trial. And now, Charles, I

am prepared to attend you." She raised the dead man's icy hand, and pressed it to her fevered lips; then, accompanied by Bracey, hastened from the scene. The mendicant took his departure in a different direction; and the only tokens of recent events remaining on the spot were the two officers, who continued senseless upon the ground.

In the meantime, the defeated men returned to Bristol with as much speed as their bruises and injuries would permit them; and, having given information of what had occurred, a strong detachment was sent out to apprehend the delinquents. The first party, however, knew nothing of what had taken place immediately preceding the farmer's death, nor, indeed, were they acquainted with any circumstance connected with that event. The orders they had received were, to arrest certain individuals, and they had remained in close concealment till the signal was given for them to approach. The directions to the second party were, consequently, extremely vague; and on arriving at the scene of the late conflict, they found it totally deserted, and not the slightest vestige of anything that could guide them in their future actions. The two men who had been left insensible had recovered from stupefaction, and taken their departure by a different road to that which had been passed over by their friends; whilst the only person who could have solved all their difficulties was buried beneath the waters. The leader of the detachment became perplexed and embarrassed; and, after carefully searching round the place, deemed it most advisable to retrace his steps for further orders.

It was near midnight, when the inn-yard was filled with an armed force, and every entrance guarded, to prevent escape. Numbers of people from the city, having heard strange reports of the beautiful landlady and her husband, had accompanied the authorities; and not a few were instigated by vindictive feelings, under the expectation of triumphing over those whose

fortunes they considered to be fallen. But they came too late. Bracey and Joan had departed, and were many miles away. Pursuit seemed useless, as three of the best horses had been taken from the stables, and it was evident that great caution had been used to mystify their track. Horrible rumours of bloodshed and murder were industriously circulated amongst the throng, till the excitement grew too powerful to be repressed, and, in defiance of all restraint, the inn was completely sacked.

On the following day, the magistrates employed extraordinary means to arrest the fugitives, but without avail; and the affair would have slumbered, but for the discovery of the poor murdered wretch, whose body had floated on the stream. Violent commotions ensued, large rewards were offered, diligent search was made in the neighbouring counties, but without effect; and in a few months the circumstances were only treasured in memory as an affair of mystery.

CHAPTER IX.

"Thou wert a woman, and let all
Thy faults be buried with thee."

THREE years had passed away since the flight of Bracey and his companions, and no traces of them could be discovered; but, at the expiration of that time, the phantom-highwayman again became the terror of all travellers on the different roads branching from the town of Nottingham. His exploits were still of a most daring and chivalrous character; and it appeared, by the depositions of those who had suffered from his predatory attacks, that he had latterly been accompanied by a young man, whom he seemed to be initiating in his own lawless practices, and who promised fair, if justice could be eluded, to rival his master in the art. Light of person, extremely agile, and admirably skilled in horsemanship, the young man proved an able auxiliary to the desperate highwayman; and in the numerous conflicts in which they had been involved, every one bore testimony to their constant devotedness in endeavouring to protect each other from danger. The herculean strength of the master-robber frequently averted the death-blow from striking his companion, and the youth's quick perception and agility were extremely useful in situations where physical force was of but little avail.

Many were the schemes adopted by the authorities to capture these marauders; but the terrible Bracey's name had not only inspired a dread in men's minds, but he had also with a liberal hand secretly distributed the fruits of his plunder amongst the surrounding villagers, who generally warned him

of expected danger, and not unfrequently assisted in his escapes. Large rewards were set upon the heads of the outlaws; numbers had tried to discover their retreat, but they still continued dauntless and free.

At the latter end of March, in the year 1685, on the evening of a day that had been tempestuous and stormy, but become tranquil as the sun descended, a party of travellers, some in a carriage and others on horseback, ascended the hill between Ruddington and Nottingham, for the purpose of approaching the latter town. The road was difficult and narrow, lying in some parts between two lofty banks, in which either nature or art had formed deep recesses and ravines, and in the twilight hour presenting to the superstitious mind an idea of the abodes of those who held communion with the spirits of another world. Indeed, there were stories current, that in these dark spots the agents of the Evil One had frequently been seen holding their mysterious councils with the master whom they served. The carriage had passed the first hill with safety, and had nearly reached the summit of Wilford Hill; when two horsemen, well armed, commanded the drivers to stop, and on being obeyed, demands were immediately made for money and valuables. As there were ladies in the carriage, no resistance was offered, and they prepared to comply; but the party of equestrians, who had been left some distance behind, coming up at the moment, a sharp contest ensued, much to the disadvantage of the two highwaymen; who, after discharging their pistols with fatal effect, found it necessary, if possible, to secure their safety by flight. But this was now no easy task. The spot in which they were engaged was where one of the deep recesses had fallen in, and left a large space by the road-side, the bank being nearly perpendicular, and composed of loose crags, over which the trees bent down their branches nearly to the ground. On both sides of

this space the robbers were hemmed in, and commanded to surrender.

"Bracey can never yield!" exclaimed the oldest of the two; "the odds are many, it is true, but I have encountered greater." Then turning to his companion, he added, "Remember, it is for life or death; now follow me." He dashed the rowels of his spurs into the sides of his strong animal, and rushed with such impetuous force upon one division of his foes, that they instinctively gave way to the shock. Then turning his fleet steed towards the bank, where it sloped more gradually, he briskly pressed up it. His companion was close in his rear; but just as they had reached the top, a ball from a blunderbuss passed through the heart of the horse on which the younger robber rode, and it instantly dropped dead. A moment's embarrassment, and the rider would have been crushed under the ponderous animal, that rolled over the broken crags into the area below; but with astonishing dexterity and quickness, he sprang from the creature's back whilst falling, and stood against the light of the sky, a conspicuous mark for the fire of the party. Nor did they miss the opportunity; the balls whizzed fearfully around, but with one bound he followed his comrade, who had dashed down the declivity, leaving the bank between them and their opponents.

Bracey reined in, as soon as he perceived the danger of his companion, and taking him up on his horse, continued his way towards the banks of the Trent. But amongst the party they had attacked, were some young and daring spirits, who commenced a swift pursuit. There was still light enough to distinguish the fugitives as, reckless of obstructions which would have appalled an ordinary mind, they urged the fleet animal to increased exertion; but though the additional weight he carried was not very great, two persons instead of one necessarily impeded the career of a creature that hitherto had been

seldom outran. In vain did Bracey's companion beg to be left to his fate, that he might not prevent his friend's escape. The highwayman grasped him still firmer in his strong arm, and impetuously stirred up the mettle of his now languishing steed with the spur. The noble animal, as if sensible of the danger which threatened his riders, put forth his utmost strength; but the foremost of his pursuers was rapidly gaining ground upon him, and shouting to the rest, who were now lost sight of in the darkness.

Thus the race continued for some time, till the person in advance had nearly gained the flank of Bracey's horse; when, by a dexterous swerve, the highwayman suddenly wheeled round, and, by a side-blow with the butt of his heavy whip, made his adversary reel in the saddle. But it failed of the effect intended; the gallant man still kept his seat, and without a moment's hesitation returned to the attack, in hope that his friends would speedily arrive to succour him. The highwayman plainly perceived he had now no alternative, but to rid himself of his bold enemy; and his companion, aware that he was in a situation injurious to his friend's vast powers, sprung from the saddle, determined to render him every assistance on foot. But the wary pursuer, sensible of the odds, turned his steed upon the youth, and, with one bound, laid him prostrate on the earth. So suddenly had this been effected, that no foresight could have prevented it, and the unhappy young man was stretched insensible by a blow from the horse's hoof. A bitter execration burst from the lips of Bracey, when he saw the inanimate body of his friend, and heard the noise of the pursuing party as they rapidly approached. Drawing forth a pistol he had kept in reserve, he took his deadly aim, and the corpse of his enemy was laid extended by the side of the young robber.

For the first time in his life, the cool intrepidity of the highwayman seemed to forsake him, and he re-

mained several minutes undecided how to act. At length, notwithstanding the pursuers were now visible, he dismounted, and endeavoured to raise the body of his young companion; but the time he had lost in hesitation could not be recalled, and before his purpose was accomplished, he found every hope of retreat destroyed, and five or six horsemen surrounding him.

"Stand back!" exclaimed Bracey, with a voice that made his opponents shudder. "The man who singly advances, dies; and, come all, one must satiate my rage."

"Surrender!" cried the foremost of the party, in a shrill voice, "or your life will be sacrificed."

"Surrender?" repeated Bracey, contemptuously; "to whom?—and for what? Surrender?—to those who would triumph in their conquest, and hereafter make it their boast? Surrender?—to have my days lengthened but a brief span, and then to grace the annals of your county executions? Never! Stand back, I say!"—observing the same man approach. "A deed has been done for which one of you must suffer;"—he rested on his knee, and pressed the inanimate youth closely to his heart,—“ay, all should lie as yonder corpse, could one man's strength effect it."

"'Tis useless to contend with such superior numbers," rejoined the same shrill voice, "and, Bracey, I have an additional account to settle with you—an old score I have long desired to rub off."

The man rode up to the robber, who sprang wildly upon his feet, and shrieked with rage. "Is it so?" he cried; "is my old enemy before me? Ha! ha! ha! 'tis the lusty squire, then, and now, Bracey, for revenge!"

The highwayman proudly confronted the horseman, who threw himself from his saddle, and clapped a pistol to the robber's breast. But the latter dexterously evaded it, and, clutching his antagonist round the neck, a fearful struggle ensued. The rest of the

party, apprehensive of injuring their companion, reserved their fire; but when they saw him stretched upon the ground, and Bracey's knee firmly planted upon his breast—when they saw the robber's hand upraised, as if to give the death-blow to his victim, their pistols were instantly discharged, and the highwayman fell prostrate on his daring foe.

Eagerly dismounting, the whole party rushed upon the robber, and each with desperate energy firmly clutched him in their sinewy grasp. It was a useless display of strength, for the lawless Bracey was a lifeless corpse. Without a moment's delay, the ponderous body of the highwayman was raised; but his right hand still grasped the fallen squire by the breast, which force alone could remove, and the bloody fingers held a reeking blade, red with the crimson stream from his opponent's heart. A heavy groan burst from the murdered Benson, and his spirit accompanied the robber's to the bar of that tribunal from whence there is no appeal.

The bodies were removed to an adjacent barn, an old yet strong building, which had occasionally been used as a temporary barracks during the civil war. It still retained memorials of its warlike occupants, and its plastered walls exhibited many a text of Scripture, coarsely written by means of wood blackened in the fire. These were interlined with snatches from obscene songs, and rude caricatures of Cromwell and his friends. Here was drawn a crucifix, and there an open Bible. In one part appeared a flaming brand, with the words, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon;" and directly beneath it was pictured a butcher killing a sheep, with the words, "Thus hath he done to the innocent."

The bodies were extended, side by side, upon a sort of raised platform, at one extremity of the building, and a large coarse cloth was spread over all. A lamp in the centre threw its flickering gleams on surrounding objects, and was calculated, by the dimness of its

light, to excite even in the minds of the brave a thrill of apprehension. The watch had kindled a fire, and its ruddy glow imparted a still stronger degree of interest to the scene: but its warmth gradually operated on those who were near to it, till their eyes were sealed in downy slumber. One only remained awake—the mendicant Jefferies. He had constantly shared the good fortune of Bracey, and by his wretched appearance, when begging in the town, precluded all suspicion of any connection with the desperate highwayman; whilst he was enabled to collect correct information of every circumstance that could tend to his patron's security and advantage. The very building in which they now were had been their usual rendezvous, and during the affray Jefferies was approaching the spot, but came only in time to see its fatal termination. He joined the party unheeded, and became a watcher amongst the rest.

Silent he sat, his fierce eyes gleaming with ill-suppressed vengeance, and his whole appearance presenting the statue-like form of moody madness. His look was directed towards the bodies, and whilst he gnashed his teeth, the muttered curses burst with stifled groans from his lips. His mind was full of action, and he meditated the desperate attempt of carrying off the remains of his two associates; though for what purpose, or to what good end, he could not define. There was something daring in the deed, and he meditated upon the best plan for securing its performance.

Suddenly his eyeballs seemed to be starting from their sockets; he lowered his head and half unclosed his lips, as if gasping for breath; his hand was convulsively writhed amongst the matted hair upon his brow, which he pressed with agonizing strength against his forehead, and his fixed gaze was bent upon the cloth that covered the frail remnants of humanity. Gradually he became more calm.

"It was but delusion," he slowly muttered; "the

dead are motionless. Yet, surely, 'tis not a mockery of sight;—the cloth moves again, and perhaps—oh, horror! the dead may stand in unearthly array against me!" He covered his face with his hands, and bent his head upon his knees. In a few minutes he again looked up; but all was still, and he chided himself for suffering childish weakness to subdue his mental faculties.

At this moment a groan, as if from some individual suffering pain, was heard within the walls, and two or three of the sleepers were aroused by it. They looked with inquiring solicitude on one another, and then at the mendicant, but all remained silent, and they again prepared to catch the sweets of rest, so delightful to tired nature. A second groan, more deep, more awful than the first, resounded, and the whole party, awaking up, crowded together in fear and amazement. Not so the mendicant; he took the lamp, and, advancing to the platform, as if urged by desperation, he tore off the coverlet and gazed upon the bodies. The death-stricken features of each were unmoved; the ghastly livid expression remained the same; and, after a look of many recollections on the faces of his late associates, he again covered them over, and retraced his steps.

The party once more gathered round the fire, and conjecture was busy as to the causes of alarm. Some attributed the groans to the troubled spirit of the highwayman, as Satan wrestled with his prey. Others thought that unconfessed sins lay heavy on the soul of the murdered Benson, which still hovered over its ruined tenement.

"I have heard," said a villager, "that Squire Benson has done many evil actions afore he came into this neighbourhood, and he has been no poor man's friend since."

"He was a hard-hearted landlord," continued another, "and tyrannical as a magistrate; but he has met his doom, and a terrible one it is."

"They do say," rejoined a third, "that 'twere he who first drove Breacy to his course of life, by trying to cross him in his love. I don't know whether Miss Phillips be living or not; but I do remember when she wur as beautiful as a summer sunset—but that's some twenty year ago."

The mendicant looked in the direction of the speaker, but there was no mutual recognition; they were utter strangers to each other.

"It could not have been the wind that sougled," said another, "for there is scarcely a breath of air stirring. But I see no use in being afear'd of the dead; they seem quiet enow."

"Thou be-est more afear'd of the dead than any here, Tummas," said the first speaker, laughing; "and, lad, I'll bet thee a quart of ale, thou durst not go and touch Breacy, for all thy boasting."

"Who? I—I not dare?" replied the man addressed. "That's a good un, any how! Why do'st think I be more afear'd than Ould Rags here," pointing to Jefferies. "Though, to be sure, they do say that same Breacy had dealings with the devil, and there be some difference between a Christian corpse and one possessed."

"Old Rags, as you are pleased to call him," retorted Jefferies, "fears neither the living nor the dead. He is old, but he can be his own protector against a living foe, and when he sees two, who were once the most bitter enemies to each other, lying tranquilly together side by side, he need not apprehend much injury from either, even though a legion possessed their bodies. But let us put your courage to the test. I saw upon a finger of the right hand of the younger robber a sparkling gem. Go slide the bauble off, and bring it here."

"A challenge!—a challenge!" shouted the party. "Tummas, thee canst not escape, lad; so pull up a bould heart, and take the ring. Perhaps the man will give it thee for Effie."

The name of his sweetheart seemed to infuse fresh vigour into the heart of the labourer, and he knew that he should be well jeered if he failed to fulfil the task; yet it was evident he set about it most reluctantly. Taking the lamp, he looked downwards and proceeded boldly for a few steps; but, raising his eyes as he advanced, his progress became more slow, and when near the platform, he stopped altogether.

"Nay, Tom, my lad, don't flinch," exclaimed he who had first spoken; "the young chap will not bite thee, and thou hast nought to be robbed of—even should the ould thief get at his tricks—except thy brains, which would be dear bought at two farthings."

"I wish Effie could see him now," said another; "he looks as bold as a lion."

"Go on, ye set of scoffers," replied the young man; and approaching the platform with haste, he eagerly removed the cloth, and was about to take the hand of the corpse. But the bloody spectacle was too terrific for his sight; a misty vapour came before his eyes, and he would have fallen, had not Jefferies been close at hand to catch him in his arms. But this only increased his terror, for not being aware that the mendicant was near, his bewildered mind fancied that he was within the grasp of the "demon-robber," and his shrieks for mercy were appalling. The panic spread to the rest of the party, for, unacquainted with the ridiculous ideas of the young labourer, they listened only to his cries; but the stern voice of Jefferies quickly explained the cause, and most of them approached the bodies to quiet the young man's alarm.

The mendicant knelt down, and raised the hand of the youthful highwayman: the moisture gathered in his eyes—his voice was tremulous and weak, as he bade the terrified young man not fear a thing so frail—a convulsive sob almost rent his breast—he parted

the clustering locks that shaded the robber's forehead, and the face, even in death, was pre-eminently beautiful. Jefferies seemed absorbed in the contemplation of such perfect loveliness: he had known the blighted flower in the days of early blossoming, when the bright sun of rich prosperity nourished its tender leaf; he had seen it brought to maturity, and now untimely blasted in its full perfection. A sympathetic feeling seemed to communicate its influences to all present, and deep silence pervaded the melancholy scene.

"Thine existence has been brief," said Jefferies, mournfully; "yet every day has been to thee a year of sorrow. But ah! how's this? Stand back, ye miscreants!" screamed the mendicant, still holding the hand, but recoiling from the corpse; "those eyes should be fixed; these fingers should be motionless! Wretches, ye are mocking me, and blood will have blood!" He started to his feet; the men gave way before the terrific being who rushed amongst them, when gradually the hand of the young robber was uplifted, and the eyes were at the same time slowly unclosed. The whole party made a simultaneous movement to the door, and in a few seconds Jefferies stood alone,—the living amongst the dead. But with singular inconsistency, the moment the barn was cleared, he closed the door and fastened it. Then hastening to the platform, he raised the head of the young robber, chafed the temples, and taking a small leather bottle from his pocket, he poured some of its contents into the outlaw's mouth. Instantly there was a gurgling in the throat, and spasmodic twitchings of the body gave indications of returning animation. In a few minutes, the highwayman was sufficiently recovered to look round with bewildering surprise, and Jefferies, taking him in his arms, conveyed him to a seat near the fire.

"I have had a strange dream, Jefferies," said he; "and, I fear, have slept long. Has Charles returned?

It surely must be near morning, and I am not refreshed, for my head feels strangely confused."

"Do not trust in dreams," returned Jefferies; "but think upon realities. Do you fear the dead? If not, I can save you yet."

"The dead! the dead!" replied the other. "Who, then, has fallen? and what are yonder dark masses in the gloom? I thought we were alone."

"It is useless to delay," said Jefferies, speaking to himself; and then addressing his companion, "those dark masses are the untenanted shells of spirits that have fled for ever. There has been an affray, and these have fought their last." At this moment there was a knocking without, for the peasantry had again returned, and tried to gain admittance. "Your enemies are at hand," whispered Jefferies; "but they think that you are also numbered with the dead, and if your courage would but sustain you to lie by their side a short time, I would find means for your escape."

"The trial is a dreadful one," replied the robber; "but, Charles, if it will restore me to you, I will not hesitate to make it. Yet tell me, Jefferies, why is Bracey not here? I have some fearful recollections crossing my mind——"

The knocking at the door interrupted further converse, and the mendicant again urged his associate to extend himself in the place from which he had so recently risen. The outlaw complied. He advanced to the platform, leaning upon Jefferies for support; but whilst resuming his former position, his eyes, with shuddering instinct, were directed to the corpse by his side, and the young highwayman instantly recognized the features of his once daring friend, the powerful, intrepid Bracey. Throwing himself upon the body, his arms were firmly entwined around the dead man's neck, as with desperate energy he exclaimed, "Now, fortune, I defy you! The worst has come, and all future evils I can patiently endure." The knocking at the door still continued, and it was

evident that some person in authority was giving directions to force it open.

"Think of an ignominious end!" said Jefferies; "a lofty gibbet, and a thousand staring eyes upon you." But his words were uttered to a deaf ear, and he had scarcely time to throw himself at full length upon the ground, when the door was burst open, and a body of peasantry, headed by a magistrate, rushed in. Those who had watched the early part of the night, gazed with speechless horror when they saw the young robber embracing his neighbour corpse, and the mendicant stretched out, apparently lifeless. The magistrate gave orders for Jefferies to be carried into the cool air, and then seized the youthful outlaw by the arm: but it was powerless in his grasp. He gently raised the head, but it again fell heavily on Bracey's breast; and, though no believer in supernatural mysteries, the worthy magistrate was exceedingly puzzled in his thoughts. At length, he undid the young robber's vest, and in placing his hand upon the heart, discovered, not only that life still beat within, but also that the unhappy being before him was a female. His generous nature was instantly awakened, and without communicating his discovery, he directed some of his people to convey the wretched Joan (for it was she) to his own house. With humane caution they lifted the insensible woman in their arms, and carried her away. An examination of the other bodies took place, but death had triumphed there; and the magistrate, having doubled the watch, returned to his residence.

It was about noon that the road between the town of Nottingham and the Trent Bridge was crowded with hundreds of spectators, who awaited the decision of a coroner's jury, and the approach of the bodies from the barn. But there was a deeper, stronger interest excited, when it was known that the youthful companion of Bracey had survived, and that companion was the devoted, the beautiful Joan Phillips.

The shades of evening were rapidly descending when the melancholy procession appeared in view, and it seemed as if the whole population of Nottingham had collected together to escort it into the town. First came a hearse, having the bodies of Benson and his courageous friends; then a light waggon, covered with boughs, beneath which lay the livid corpse of Bracey; next followed a close carriage, surrounded by constables, and said to contain the once happy, but now miserably fallen, Joan. In this order they entered the town; but whilst the hearse proceeded onwards to the inn, the waggon and the close carriage drew up at the county jail. Hitherto the populace had conducted themselves peaceably enough; but when they saw the corpse of the robber lifted from beneath its leafy covering, a desperate rush was made to gain possession of it, that the mob might drag it through the streets. But the constabulary force repelled the attack, and the body of the highwayman was carried within the prison walls. The hapless Joan had already been secured during the scuffle, and the people separated for their homes, to talk over the events of the day. On the following morning an extraordinary meeting of the magistracy took place, and Joan Phillips was fully committed to take her trial at the assizes for highway robbery and murder.

At the still and solemn hour of midnight, a bricklayer's cart quitted the entrance to the county jail, and proceeding from thence up the Mansfield road, escorted by four horsemen enveloped in huge cloaks, arrived at a flat of greensward upon the summit of the hill. The night was pitchy dark, except when the red lightning sent its awful flash across the sky, and threw a terrific but momentary glare upon the face of nature. Between these visitations, the dim lights from a few lanterns pointed out the spot where two men were standing on the brink of an open grave. The cart drew up by its side.

"Is all prepared?" inquired the man who appeared

to act as a superior. "I see you have rightly chosen the spot. The murderer, who should have met his death upon the gallows' tree, ought to be buried at the gallows' foot. Is the hole of the depth I ordered?"

"Yes, yes, master," replied one of the men, resting on his spade; "I'll warrant he'll never trouble us again, when once at the bottom. No doubt, there will be many shoots from so capital a root. He should have hemp-seed sown above his corpse, for it would be a thriving plant upon such a goodly soil. He was a brave and generous soul, too; and once, I can remember—but see, there is a stranger in the hollow beneath us, watching our motions."

"Then cease your prating, and get to business," said the first speaker. "Turn the horse away from the pit, and bring the tail of the cart just over its mouth—there, that will do. Now shoot your load."

The fore-part of the vehicle was raised up, and as the streaming lightning flashed upon the spectacle, the naked body of a man was seen slipping from the inside. It descended heavily into its narrow prison-house, the cart went away, the earth was hastily filled in, till the accumulating heaps were piled upon the last remains of Edward Bracey.

A few weeks afterwards, and the judge of assize entered the town; and, perhaps, never was interest more universally excited for any individual, than for the beautiful woman who, through her strong and undeviating attachment to an outlaw, as well as sharing his depredations, had rendered herself amenable to justice. From the time she became sensible of Bracey's death, no smile had lightened up her features, except in one instance, and that was a smile of demoniac triumph when she heard that Benson had been killed. The day of trial approached; but she remained calm and collected, fully aware of her impending fate, and determined to meet death without shrinking from its terrors. Life seemed to her scarce

worth the preservation,—the tie which bound her to existence had been severed; and though the Rev. George Masterson, then vicar of St. Mary's, endeavoured to revive in her mind the only source from which the wretched can derive consolation, yet she rejected the dictates of religion, as one who had sinned beyond the hope of pardon. In vain the sacred oracle offered peace to the troubled mind; in vain he pointed to the throne of mercy, and implored her, in humility of heart, to fall prostrate at its footstool; in vain he directed her intellectual faculties to the intervention of a Mediator, who spared not his own life that he might save the guilty from eternal misery.

Joan, whilst firmly resolved to evince no apprehensions of her fate that might be construed into fear under her present circumstances, at the same time experienced in her breast a deep, a lasting, a horrible despair, as it respected the future. Her earliest education had been amongst the Puritans, and the ground-work of future faith was laid in stern obedience to sanctity of life. She knew the nature and extent of her transgressions,—she knew that her hands had been stained with human blood, and she felt that she had passed the boundary of divine endurance. Earnestly did the worthy vicar warn her against presumption in limiting the goodness and loving-kindness of the OMNIPOTENT; but with that fatal decision which had hitherto so strongly marked her character, she became more strengthened in the desperate act of devoting her immortal soul to everlasting torments.

From the period of her commitment, powerful intercession had been employed in her favour (for her beauty won upon all hearts); but she seemed indifferent as to the result, and in her manner and conversation neither courted to live, nor betrayed a fear to die. Such was the state of Joan, when the grand jury returned true bills into court for murder

and highway robbery, and the beautiful woman was placed at the bar to make her plea. Every part of the building was crowded to excess; every eye was bent upon the lovely features of the prisoner; a convulsive throb shook many a stout heart; and the hard brow of the judge relaxed, whilst a tear trembled in his eye. Joan alone—with respectful demeanour—Joan alone stood undaunted. Her counsel (for the humane mayor of Nottingham, Robert Wortley, Esq., had at his own expense provided for the defence) sat opposite to her, and with tremulous look watched the countenance of his client. He had conferred with her, and rested his hope of rescuing her from an untimely end, by pleading that she was *une femme couverte*, and therefore acted under the guidance and directions of her husband, who was alone responsible. But Joan destroyed his expectations of a triumph, by declaring that she had never been married, though the secret rested solely with herself. Still the counsel urged that she should take advantage of the circumstance; and, as the fact of her being single was unknown, she might passively leave it in his hands to make the most of.

The clerk of the arraigns read over the indictments, and then demanded, "How say you, prisoner, are you guilty, or not guilty?"

"My lord," replied Joan, addressing the judge in that sweet harmonious voice which had so often captivated the hearer—"my lord, may I be permitted to say a few words, previous to my answering the charge?"

"Prisoner," said the judge, "it is my duty at this moment to receive your plea without preliminary observations. Your counsel here will, I am sure, discharge his obligations faithfully; nay, more, with——" he checked himself. "Prisoner, you had better leave it in his hands."

"My lord," returned the devoted woman, "with

earthly counsel I have done, and heavenly counsel has rejected me. Yet, my lord——”

“May it please your lordship,” exclaimed the counsel, interrupting her, “I am not aware of what the prisoner wishes to make mention. I wish, my lord, to ground my defence”—and he looked hard at the prisoner—“on the fact of her being under the influence and instigation of her *husband*,”—laying a particular emphasis on the last word.

The counsel for the crown immediately rose. “I should be sorry, my lord, to interfere with my learned brother’s humanity; but in the present case, my lord, harsh as the duty devolving on me may be, I must—ay, and will—fearlessly perform it. My learned brother has commenced his defence before the prisoner’s plea has been taken. We all know, my lord, what those irregular hints mean; but, my lord, I would warn my learned friend,—whose reputation I value most highly,—if he has no better foundation for defence, than what he mentions, not to trust to one so frail;—or rather, my lord, I will candidly put it to my learned friend, whether he has any certificate or evidence of the prisoner’s being married at all.”

“This is folly,” exclaimed Joan; “I will myself readily admit that I have never been married.”

A simultaneous hasty drawing of the breath seemed to actuate every one present as this declaration, firmly pronounced, was distinctly heard in every part of the crowded court. “And now, my lord, as I am denied the opportunity of speaking on my situation, I answer to the charges brought against me,”—she paused, whilst a death-like stillness prevailed,—“I answer, my lord—guilty!”

Joan bowed her head upon her hands, and leaned on the front of the dock for support. For several minutes the silence was alone broken by sobs and groans. The counsel for the crown looked round him for a moment, and then averted his face; the

counsel for the prisoner crossed his arms upon his breast, and gazing with a mixture of vexation and amazement on the beautiful woman, stood as if entranced; the judge busied himself over some papers, on which more than one large drop of sympathy fell from his aged eyes; till, rallying himself, he slowly articulated,—

"Prisoner, the law is not lenient. Think well, then, on your plea. If you persist, it will be my painful duty to pass the extreme penalty upon you, and to hold out no hope of mercy. Perhaps you had better consult your counsel."

A lowering look of contempt played upon the features of Joan, as she answered, "No, my lord; it is by man's voice that poor weak women are betrayed. I,—yes I, nursed in the lap of luxury, and cradled on the bosom of innocence—I have fallen a prey to its wiles. But death has dissolved our earthly bonds. What I once was is fearfully contrasted with what I now am. Man has done this; but man shall never see me shrink from its consequences. I am ready to make the expiation for my error; and again, my lord, though sensibly alive to your humane design, yet my plea is—guilty."

The plea was recorded; the judge closed his eyes and threw himself back in his seat, as if hesitating whether to delay giving judgment or not. At length, whilst a breathless silence ensued, he directed the clerk to "call upon the prisoner."

The clerk obeyed. "Prisoner, you stand, by your own confession, convicted of murder; what say you, why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

A convulsive spasm passed across the features of Joan as she heard the awful inquiry, but it was only momentary.

"My lord," said she, "having pleaded guilty, it would be vain for me to try to extenuate my crimes;

and if I could excite your clemency, that clemency would be but ill bestowed on one who has no desire to possess it. No, my lord, the ordeal must be passed; for what is life, when destitute of reputation? The daughter of Major Phillips is too proud to live under the contumely of the world. My lord, I await your sentence."

The judge slowly turned towards the criminal, and placing the black cap upon his head, solemnly pronounced her final doom. She heard the awful fiat unmoved—at least there was no outward display of emotion—and, gracefully courtesying, she withdrew from the bar, amidst the wonder, admiration, and regrets of every soul present.

The crime to which she had pleaded guilty being murder, only a few hours were allowed to prepare for the great change from time to eternity; and the excellent clergyman immediately attended in her cell, to give his spiritual aid in fitting her for the melancholy occasion. To his surprise, he found her not only resigned, but cheerful and animated—looking forward to her execution as an expiatory sacrifice that was to atone for her misdeeds. A high-wrought enthusiasm inspired her with mental energy, beyond what could possibly be conceived; and the reverend divine, taking advantage of her train of thought, endeavoured to impart right notions of redeeming grace. He pointed out to her understanding, that the penalty of death was a mere earthly punishment, decreed by her fellow-creatures for moral offences of great magnitude; and having herself acknowledged her transgressions, and consequently the justice of her sentence, she would do right to meet her doom with becoming fortitude. But he appealed to her knowledge of the truth, that there must be a future state, either for lasting happiness or endless misery, over which the decrees of man could hold no control; and he implored her to look up to that BEING, who remembered the weakness of his creatures, and had

declared, "Those that come unto me, I will in no wise cast them out."

Joan listened with deep attention, and the remembrance of her mother's early counsel now came with all its freshness on her mind. The long lapse of years which intervened since she had seen that kind parent consigned to the tomb seemed to vanish with all its black catalogue of crime; and standing, as she herself was, upon the verge of the grave, she once more grew in heart a child, as in her days of innocence and peace. She bent her knees in prayer, whilst the pious clergyman poured forth his petitions in fervency of spirit.

He ceased; but the opening of futurity, coupled with the enormity of her guilt, created a reaction in her breast, and again despair triumphed. The minister beheld the sudden, though not altogether unexpected, change with pain; yet his hopes of saving an immortal soul from perdition were not entirely abandoned. He left her in her present mood, trusting that when the feeling had in some measure subsided, the penitent would again look to the throne of grace for succour in the hour of peril. Nor was he disappointed; for at his next visit he found her calm, and desirous of listening to his kind admonitions.

It was on a lovely spring morning at the latter end of April, that the Mansfield road was thronged with spectators, to witness the last expiation which Joan Phillips could make to the offended laws. The sun was shining on the opening foliage, and the meadows looked gaily beautiful in their tender verdure; all nature wore a smiling face, and gave promise of a splendid May. The scene from the summit of the hill was richly picturesque; but the assembled multitude on that fatal spot saw not its beauties, or contrasted its glowing aspect with the spectacle of death they were about to witness.

At length the cavalcade arrived, and Joan kneeled at the foot of the ladder, whilst the worthy clergyman

bowed himself by her side, and directed her thoughts to that hereafter on which she was about to enter. She knew not that she was praying above the grave of Bracey, for the place of his interment had been concealed from her, and she looked upon the instrument of execution with a firmness that both appalled and astonished. Since her confinement, the roseate tint of health had faded, but the paleness of her cheek rendered her countenance still more interesting. At this moment, however, a feverish flush of excitement spread over her face, and heightened the loveliness of features that had seldom been equalled. The crowd gazed in silence, except the occasional sob of anguish that burst from many a pitying breast. She arose from her knees, and the clergyman pressed her soft and tender hand, warm with all the glow of life and vigour. It was the last pressure on the shores of time; for, in a few minutes, the pulse had ceased its beating, and that hand was still and motionless. Her brilliant eyes, unsubdued by the gaze of the thousands that surrounded her, glanced at the bright orb that was dispensing light and heat; she felt his warm beams descend upon her cheek, and then for a moment the playful breeze wanted among her glossy ringlets, tempering the solar heat. The sun still continued to shine in all his glory; the wind still continued to sport with many a lovely lock; but Joan felt them no more. Her struggle was but short; and she, who a few moments before stood in the fulness of beauty and health, hung suspended from the fatal frame—a lifeless corpse.

After the usual time, the body was taken down and interred on the north side of Saint Mary's churchyard. Busy feet are now constantly passing and repassing above her perishing remains, and no one thinks of those who lie below.

It was nearly two years after this event, that the stiff and frozen body of an aged man was found one morning, at daybreak, stretched upon the grave of

the condemned, where it is supposed he had passed the night. Death had fixed his stern and rigid features; but there were not wanting many who recognised in the corpse the mortal remains of the mendicant Jefferies, and on the spot where he died those remains were speedily interred.

I DRINK TO HEADS:

A Tale of British Guiana.

I DRINK TO HEADS.

"A negro has a soul, an't please your honour."

STERNE.

It was towards the close of the year 182—, that I was accidentally strolling through George Town, Demerara, with all the listlessness of a thorough West Indian (though I had then been but a few months in the country), when chance led me to one of the wharfs, or jetties, that project a considerable distance into the river. A small building had been erected at the extreme point, for the purpose of screening any person that might be waiting for a boat from the intense heat of the sun; and into this building I entered, as well to seek shelter from the solar beams, as to enjoy the refreshing breeze after it had cooled its parching warmth on the bosom of the ever-changing waters.

By the side of the quay a small country schooner was moored, and on its deck sat several stout negroes, with a well-filled calabash of rum before them. One of them, by his dress, appeared to be superior to the rest; and I soon ascertained, by the title which was given to him, that he was the captain of the boat. In age he seemed to be between fifty and sixty; his woolly hair was turned grey, and his countenance, whilst retaining all the peculiarities of the African, yet had a frankness and candour about it that at once prepossessed a person in favour of him.

He was of a middle stature, but his limbs were perfectly herculean in muscle and symmetry, manifesting indications of vast bodily strength; and there was a something majestic in his bearing, which realized, to my mind, many of the tales of giants I had read in early life.

"Ky, hear to him captain dere! he tink ebery body hab old head," exclaimed a young negro, who did not appear to have passed his twentieth year, and had just been rebuked by the captain for some frivolous expression he had used.

"No, nebber, boy," replied the aged negro. "Old monkey tan tiff in de bush; young monkey come out, and Copper-skin* catch him for make Buckra† sport."

"Dar Bucks catch negur, too," rejoined the youth, in somewhat of a petulant manner; but observing the eye of the old man rolling with a fearful scowl, he added, "but n'em mind, daddy; me neber mean for vex you——"

"Heeree, boy!" exclaimed the captain. "When Jumbée‡ want to cut de old man's heart, he take de foolish tongue for stab him wi' " Then seizing the calabash, he added, "I drink to HEADS!"

Deep silence pervaded the group for several minutes, and each looked dejectedly at the other. A fierceness was flashing in the aged negro's eye, as he quaffed the liquor, but little accordant with his years; and as he arose from his seat and crossed his sinewy arms upon his breast, there was a firm clenching of the fist and a grinding of the teeth, which plainly showed strong mental agony.

"I drink to HEADS!" exclaimed each of the party, as the calabash went round; and whether it was the effects of the liquor, or the (to me) unmeaning words which preceded the draught, never did I witness so

* The Red Indians.

† Buckra is the negro term for white man.

‡ Jumbée, the Evil Spirit.

remarkable a change in the manners of all. Instead of the jocose familiarity which had characterized them but a short time before, the whole now looked up to the grey-headed negro with deferential reverence, whilst he stood pressing the deck with his weight, and listening with bitter gratification to the often-repeated toast.

My curiosity was strongly awakened, and coming more forward into view, the spell seemed to be instantly broken. The negroes arose from their recumbent postures, and resumed the work on which they had been previously engaged; whilst the old man's features relaxed from their grimness, into the broad vacant expression peculiar to the African tribes.

I left the spot, wondering at the incomprehensible nature of the toast, which seemed to operate so strangely on the party; but in a short time the circumstance passed away from my mind, and it was not till about three weeks after it had occurred that it was again revived.

There is scarcely any twilight at Demerara, as from its situation (near to the equator), the sunrise and sunset is so rapid, that the change from darkness to light, and from light to darkness, occupies but a few minutes. In the evening, however, the sky is generally illumined by flashes of lightning, which throw out a faint brightness, and produce feelings of pleasure rather than of terror.

It was on one of the evenings, just previous to the setting of the sun, that I entered the gates of the fort, situated at the extreme point of land that divides the ocean from the river; and going on the ramparts, I looked towards the north-east, calling to remembrance that in that direction was the home of all my early joys.

There is, perhaps, no feeling more predominant in the breast of an Englishman, than that which feeds the fond and fervent attachment to his native land. Thousands of miles may intervene, dark clouds may

obscure the prospect, or it may only be seen through the vista of many a coming year; yet every heart still owns the bond of union, and every tongue still calls it home. I was a father; my children were in England, and what other home could there possibly be for me?

The sun was hastily descending from his perpendicular height, and his golden beams tinged the waves with beautiful and glorious hues. The sea-breeze was freshly blowing, and tempering the atmospheric heat, whilst the pale moon was just emerging from the verge of the horizon. Deeply involved in thought, I walked round the fortification. It was the first time I had ever been there, and there certainly was a desolateness about the place itself, which ill accorded with the richness of a tropical climate. On a sudden, I turned an angle of the battery, where a number of poles had been erected, and at a short distance from one of them, seated on a rock below, and outside the piles that kept the sea from washing away the platform, sat the old negro whom I had seen in the sloop. He did not observe me, for his eyes were raised to the top of one of the poles, and fixed upon some object in desperate energy. I was so near him that I could see the convulsive throes of his breast, and could hear the groans of anguish that seemed to shake his strong frame. My eyes naturally followed the direction of his, and in a moment the words, "I drink to Heads," were fearfully and horribly explained. On the summit of the pole was a human skull, from which the flesh had not all decayed. The birds had taken out the eyes, the nose was gone, the lower jaw was hanging down; but there still remained the woolly hair, which told that it had once belonged to the negro race. Each of the poles was thus occupied, and a more disgusting and revolting spectacle I never beheld. Recollection served to remind me, that these were the heads of the ringleaders in the insurrection that had lately taken place among the slaves on the east coast.

I quitted the battery, and approached the old man; but he seemed so deeply buried in thought, as not to perceive me. I touched him; he started up, and raising his hand, suddenly exclaimed, whilst pointing to the disfigured head,—“De negur’s heart up dere! Ah, massa! dar my boy. You see ’em? My eye crack for look too much; me no see ’em now. De feber make great smother, and blind de sight.” It was the perishing remains of the old man’s son.

A few days after, I was in company with Major Mac T——, of the colonial militia, and mentioning the subject to him, he seemed conversant with the whole affair, and finding I was interested in the fate of the old negro, he related the following particulars, which I here give, as near as I can recollect, in his own words:—

“That old boy, sir—I mean old Jack—is about as honest a slave as we have in the colony. He was a prince in his own land; but they nabbed him when young on the Guinea coast, and brought him here to be sold as a slave to the Dutch. The first time I knew him—and ’tis some years since—I had not long landed in this part of the world; he was a patient of mine (the major had been a surgeon) for a broken limb he got whilst protecting his master against the savage attack of a drunken and jealous Buck,* who suspected the Englishman had been rather too free with his wife. During old Jack’s confinement to his hut, I was highly gratified at witnessing the affection of his son, then a youth about sixteen years of age; who, being employed in the manager’s house, had frequent opportunities of attending upon, and showing kindness to his father. Indeed, I do not remember to have seen more dutiful regard among the polished society of Europeans, than was evinced by this young negro.

“At that time, they both belonged to Plantation

* Bucks—a name given to the Red Indians.

Providence, on the east coast, and young Sam had opportunities of instruction which rarely occur. A former manager had died some years before, and left a female child by one of his own slaves. The little girl grew up, and though there was certainly a dark shade upon her skin, yet in countenance she strongly resembled her father, who had been a very handsome man. Her form was very finely moulded; she had long, black, shining hair, and the most brilliant pair of eyes, I think, I ever saw. Still she was a slave. Her mother had never been emancipated; the child had been born in slavery; her father died without procuring her freedom, and her mother had also expired, leaving the orphan to the mercy of West India feelings,—liable to be sold to the highest bidder.

“Celia was two years younger than Sam, and having been brought up together in the house, they had better opportunities of doing little acts of kindness for each other, so that a mutual regard had grown up with their years. Not that Celia was compelled to labour; she, poor thing, was merely considered the pet of the house, and did just what she pleased. Quiet and docile, as well as humane, the negroes all loved her; whilst the manager and overseers took pleasure in teaching her to read, so that she could amuse herself with all those books which are peculiarly adapted to interest a young mind, unconnected with and ignorant of the world. Sam would sit and listen with wonder at her narratives; and, on the Sunday, groups of negroes would gather round, paying the most earnest attention to what she read, and looking up to her with that sort of veneration which belongs to a superior order of beings, but still indulging feelings of pride that she was descended from one of their own race.

“Had this unsophisticated child been educated in England, she would have soon been accomplished as well as beautiful, and, notwithstanding the taint of

African blood, might, in the course of time, have been a highly-respected wife and member of society; but here she was none other than a slave, with whom no white man could form a matrimonial alliance, and her mind, though roughly cultured, shrank from the common and fallen lot of the coloured women. She had perused her Bible, and it told her that marriage was honourable and virtue was lovely.

"She was about the age of seventeen, when the estate passed into other hands, and poor Celia was of course included in the purchase as a part and parcel of the property. New overseers were appointed, and one of these was an iron-hearted man, who was prepared to sacrifice everything that stood between him and his inordinate desires. Celia was marked out for his prey, and was more than once rescued from his brutality by the unremitting watchfulness of Sam, who cherished the most devoted affection for the girl, though her superior attainments and the circumstance of her father being an European had, in his estimation, cast an immeasurable distance between them.

"The overseer, whose name was Riley, lost no opportunity that presented itself in endeavouring to ruin Sam in the eyes of his master, and at length, from some well-connected plan, he contrived to make him appear like a thief (for I am convinced the poor fellow was innocent). He was severely flogged, and turned in with the gangs to labour in the field. His father had left the plantation, and belonged to other owners; but had he been at Providence, it could only have added bitterness to his sorrows, for the evidence appeared so conclusive against poor Sam, that no entreaties could have obtained a mitigation of punishment. But in the midst of his misery, heightened by heart-burning resentment, he received the sweetest consolation from Celia, who was fully sensible that the ill treatment he had undergone was upon her account, and therefore used every means to alleviate his sufferings. Constantly exposed to the cruel exactions of

Riley, and tasked beyond his powers, the lash was not unfrequently applied, particularly if, after the toil of the day, Sam had not been able to gather an equal quantity of fodder for the cattle with the rest. The stubbornness of his African nature sometimes revolted at the tyranny which was exercised upon him, and he refused to work till the pain inflicted by the whip compelled his exertion; he would then labour with desperate energy, whilst the half-expressed curse hung trembling on his tongue.

"In the mean time Riley devised many stratagems to accomplish the destruction of poor Celia. The manager was an indolent man, who drank deeply, and therefore he was indebted to Riley for keeping the estate in order; whilst the subordinate overseers obeyed his directions and connived at his atrocities, through fear lest he might wreak his vengeance upon them. Yet, in the midst of her persecutions, Celia had a friend in almost every negro; and though their single efforts were powerless, yet it was plain that something was in agitation to destroy the galling yoke which weighed doubly heavy from the oppressor's hands.

"On the night of a particular day, when Sam had been severely flogged, and was sent to the sick-house with fever, a shriek was heard to proceed from that part of the huts where Celia slept. Sam knew the voice, rushed from the place, and on reaching the spot, found the poor girl struggling with the villainous Riley, who, finding that neither schemes nor violence could effect his object, had satiated his rage by lacerating her back with a riding-whip. In an instant the wretch was prostrated on the ground by a blow from Sam's nervous arm, and the more courageous of the slaves gathered round, determined to protect their companion from the fury of the other overseers, who were advancing upon them with fire-arms. A short scuffle ensued; some of the poor creatures were wounded, and retreated to their huts,

but Sam and Celia had disappeared, and though the dykes were drained, and every search made for them, whether dead or alive, they were nowhere to be found.

"About twelve months after this event, Riley rode out early one morning into the backgrounds of the estate, in search of some cattle that had strayed; but not returning at the hour of evening, although he had been expected back by noon, it was feared some accident had occurred. The morning came, but still he did not make his appearance, and a party followed the direction he was supposed to have taken, for the purpose of ascertaining what had become of him, but without effect, as no clue whatever could be obtained to account for his absence, though from the character he bore, the most probable conjecture was, that injury had instigated some one or more of the slaves to put an end to his existence, and the Bucks were employed to ascertain the fact.

"The Red Indians are the avowed and mortal enemies to the negroes, whom they consider and treat as a degraded and inferior class of beings; and the government of the colony have, from time to time, encouraged this antipathy, from the following motives of policy. It has often happened that the negroes have deserted from the estates to escape punishment, or when it has been too severely inflicted. They proceed far into the interior, and select a spot, so secluded by nature from the world, that every effort of Europeans to discover their retreat would prove abortive, and they would remain unmolested till their numbers and strength augmented to an alarming degree, was it not for several companies of the Arawak tribe of Red Indians, who are kept in pay by the colony to check this desertion, and to find out where the runaway slaves have settled. The wonderful instinct of the Red Indian is almost incredible; he will track a path over the most desert wild, or through the tangled bush-ropes of the thickest forest,

and seldom fail in the pursuit. They lead a roving life, shifting from place to place as their cassava-fields are ready to yield them sustenance; and they erect their houses indiscriminately in those spots that are best suited to hunting and fishing. Of course, the runaway negroes are never safe from the movements of the tribes; and though the latter do not of themselves give immediate molestation, yet they never fail to despatch early intelligence to the nearest post-holder, who directly communicates with the Executive of the colony, and an expedition is ordered to the spot; so that the poor descendants of Ham are either killed in the struggle for freedom, or, in preserving their existence, are again reduced to a state of slavery.

"These expeditions generally consist of a party selected from the colonial militia (a body of troops composed of the inhabitants of the colony, without regard to rank or station, as every individual who becomes a resident must, within forty-eight hours after his landing, enrol himself in one of the companies), attended by a sufficient number of slaves to carry the provisions and perform the menial offices, and having several of the Indians to act as guides; for, as I said before, by their intuitive quality they will point out the footsteps of any number of negroes, where a European can discover no indications whatever; and they will also state the precise day on which they passed over the track, and, if on the same day, will fix upon the very hour. Their animal perceptions are astonishingly acute, and their speed in their native woods and over the most difficult ground is such, that few Europeans can keep pace with them, even for a short distance.

"The Bucks employed to investigate the matter repaired, with a burgher-captain and several neighbouring overseers, to the back woods, and after a ride of about nine miles through a cotton-plantation, they came to the almost impenetrable bush. Here their

search commenced, and it was certainly a most interesting sight to observe the wonderful sagacity of these people, who carefully examined the most minute objects, and inspected the twisting branches, to discover whether any of them had been displaced, or assumed a direction in the smallest degree different to that which they had received in their natural growth. At length, they came to an open savanna, or plain, and in the course of a short time announced that they were upon the trail of a horse, that had passed that way only a sun and half before.* This trail was followed with facility for several miles, till the Indians made a halt; and it was evident to common observation, that the horse had been suddenly frightened, or put to his speed, by the deep indentations which his hoofs had made.

"The guides consulted together, and then declared that both had taken place. After tracing a few furlongs, spots of blood were visible in the track, and the horse had evidently made a sudden swerve, as if again alarmed.

"The Indians pointed to a thicket of cane-trees, at no great distance, and expressed their opinion that an ambush had been formed there, and fire-arms had been used. The track of feet was soon ascertained; and it was with a thrill of horror that the party conjectured, by the indentations on the herbage, that several persons had been there, and the scattered marks of blood indicated a desperate struggle.

"Our guides conversed in their quiet way, without manifesting the slightest emotion, and then stated that the rider of the horse had been fired at from the thicket and had returned the fire with effect, as blood was found in the route by which the assailants had advanced; and though the ground appeared to have been occupied by a large party, yet, in fact, only three besides the object of attack had been present. The

* A day and a half, or about thirty-six hours,

prints of the footsteps were carefully measured to ascertain this, and the Bucks pronounced the aggressors to be negroes.

"This point being satisfactorily determined, the party returned to the town, and made a report of what had been discovered. The governor immediately gave orders for a detachment of the colonial militia to proceed without delay in following up the trail which the Indians had made out, under the expectation that it would eventually lead to a negro encampment.

"At that period I held a commission as lieutenant, and being a medical man at the same time, the governor directed me to join the detachment, that I might act in the double capacity. A company of 150 whites (many of them riflemen), nearly double the number of slaves, and about 30 Red Indians, formed the party, and we started by daybreak, in the month of June, from Plantation Chateaux Margeau, to thread the mazes of the dark forest. A little before sunset we arrived at the spot where the ambush had been laid, and here we prepared to halt for the night. The light tents were soon pitched by the negroes, whilst others lighted fires and prepared dinner, and the Indians, jealously gathering themselves into a separate body at a distance, set their wives to work to get ready their meal.

"The whole of the militia, both officers and privates, being, as I stated before, composed of respectable merchants, traders, clerks, &c., discipline was rather relaxed; and our first day's halt most certainly was not characterized by the strictest sobriety. Numerous quarrels ensued, of which the negro attendants did not fail to take advantage for the purposes of plunder, and our provisions suffered amazingly; the slaves considering that the more there was consumed, the less they would have to carry.

"Night—dark night—fell upon the scene; and, disgusted with the inebriety of the party, I wandered

through the encampment. Numbers were stretched upon the ground, exposed to the noxious effects of the atmosphere, and imbibing the unwholesome dews. Others, with more caution, had wrapped themselves in their blankets, and crept beneath the covers of the tents; whilst a few, whose slaves had prized their masters' welfare, had slung their hammocks amongst the trees, and remained near them as safeguards to their persons.

"Collecting some of the strongest of the negroes, I removed as many as possible of the sleepers-out under the shelter of the tents; but there were some who obstinately returned to the open air after I had quitted them, as if heedlessly resolved on self-destruction. My servant had prepared my hammock between two large trees, and lighted a fire near, for the double purpose of driving away the musquitoes, and keeping off any reptile or beast of prey that might be hovering about.

"The noise of revelry died away, the sentinels were slumbering on their posts, and silence reigned profound, except the mournful notes of a bird whose plaintive cadence filled the mind with dejection. In a few minutes, however, I wrapped myself in the folds of my hammock, and was about to resign myself to sleep; when Hector, my negro servant, who had been listening to the bird, exclaimed, with unusual solemnity, 'Ah, massa, Jumbee 'peak dere; yet massa shut he eye, and no for hear him. De Red-skin know him talk, and come to massa for make palaver.'

"I must here tell you, that the Indians are wholly unacquainted with medicine; and when any of their tribe is sick, the pe-i-man, or magician, performs his incantations over them, and according as this impostor is propitiated, so the credulous creatures believe that the invalid will be restored to health or not. I hardly, therefore, need tell you, that persons of my profession were looked upon by the Indians as possessing the very keys of life and death,—nay, on some

occasions, I have known them bow with adoration before me, as agent to the Great Spirit. In the present instance, however, Hector had greatly contributed to enhance the wonderful powers of his master; for the faithful fellow actually believed that I was capable of detecting any fault that had been committed, and was endowed with the faculty of looking into futurity.

"I had purchased him from an old Dutchman, who was sadly tainted with superstition; and being at the same time a naturalist, had a great number of well-stuffed specimens, in glass cases. Amongst other things in his possession, was a human skeleton, which, acting upon springs, was a source of endless terror to the poor uninstructed negroes, who were utterly at a loss to account for its motions. When anything was missing, or lost, the old man would threaten to visit the skeleton, and the article was speedily returned; for he had impressed upon their minds a conviction, that Death would pursue them if he once mentioned the circumstance to his prototype.

"It may readily be supposed that Hector was glad to escape from such an object of terror; and thinking himself freed from restraint when he came into my service, he did not fail to indulge in many vices, which fear had suppressed but could not eradicate. Amongst the articles, however, which I had brought with me from England, was a pair of globes, and these were jealously scrutinized by Hector, who entertained a suspicion that they were instruments of conjuration, especially as he had observed me using the celestial globe in tracing out the positions of the stars. I had more than once surprised him looking at the monsters which represented the various constellations, and muttering something to himself; and I made his curiosity subservient to my views in keeping him honest. A friend had made me a present of a cask of excellent old Jamaica rum, and though I locked it up, as I thought very securely, yet, to my surprise, it

began to decrease more rapidly than I could account for.

"One day, I busied myself about the globes whilst Hector was present; and after turning them round in their meridians, I took out a book and pretended to read, 'Rum very good; somebody drink too much; great thief got key of store. High cockleorum, low cockleorum, tell me who got the key, and hang the thief.' I then fixed the globe at a particular place, and left it. During dinner Hector was fidgeting about the room, and I took particular notice that he avoided going near the globes, and frequently gave them a sidelong glance, as if he apprehended some exposure was about to take place.

"On the following morning, before daybreak, I secreted myself in a closet in the dining-room, and when Hector came in to his work, I could hear him muttering to himself, 'What he massa call cock-a-lorum for hang de tief. Ah, dere him cock-a-lorum, but he neber tell massa where he go for find de key. N'em mind, boy; hab one littly drop more. Cock-a-lorum no see 'em. Good cock-a-lorum neber tell massa poor negur hab soppo. Top-a-lorum, cock—top-a-lorum, bottom. Good cock-a-lorum, only one littly drop, eh?' The fellow went on, as if he wished to propitiate the globe, or the spirit that ruled it, and eventually the store was opened, and a calabash of rum carried off to his hut.

"When he returned, I suppose he examined the globe nearer; and finding that it remained perfectly still, he exclaimed, 'Dere, good cock-a-lorum, you neber tell massa me put de key in de stable; but who care for cock-a-lorum? Me turn him round, see if massa find him den.' And I could hear him turning the globe at a most tremendous rate.

"As soon as he was gone to get ready the gig for a morning drive, I came out from my place of concealment, bathed as usual, and then took my accustomed airing. Breakfast time came, and on

entering the room I casually glanced at the globe, and started back with well-feigned astonishment, but said nothing, though Hector cried out. 'Cock-a-lorum, top—cock-a-lorum, bottom; de cock-a-lorum come again.'

"I had prepared myself with a treatise on geometry, where the triangles and circles were well developed; and, taking out a pair of compasses, began to measure the globe, at the same time repeating to myself, 'Thief have key—devil have thief. Hector got key—devil take Hector. Key in the stable—Hector go fetch it.'

" 'Yes, massa, yes,' exclaimed the terrified fellow, 'me fetch him directly. Good cock-a-lorum no let debbil take a poor negur. He neber tieve rum again.' And away he went, and in a few minutes the duplicate key was laid before me on the table, and Hector retired behind my chair.

"The great difficulty was, how I should act; for if I flogged him, it would only make him a greater thief, and if I passed it by altogether, the chance was that he would laugh at me, and there would be no controlling him. Night came, and I called him to me; when, putting on a very serious countenance, I again opened my book, and appeared to be reading, 'Hector great rogue.'—'Yes, massa, me know it.'—'Devil always take thief.'—'Tau, massa, me neber tieve again.'—'Give, Hector, the key.'—'No, massa, me neber touch him.'—'If he dare steal rum again.'—'Neber, neber, massa, pon a my honour, me neber see de day for steal any more.'—'Then devil come to fetch him, and put him in a fire for ever.'—'Good massa, forgie me this time; me your negur!' and the fellow went down upon his knees, and begged most heartily for pardon.

"For some time I remained inflexible; but again looking at the book, appeared to read, 'Give Hector the key; he never steal rum again.' I consequently handed him over the key, saying, 'You hear, Hector,

what the book says.'—'Yes, massa.'—'Then take care, boy, never steal again.' And I do believe from that hour he has been tolerably honest. This, together with some cures I had made, added to the necromantic effects of a capital barometer, had elevated me so much in Hector's opinion, that he looked upon me as superior to every man in the colony.

"I shall not stop now to argue the propriety or impropriety of making such impressions on an uneducated mind. Since then I have endeavoured to instil those precepts which flow from right motives, but nothing could eradicate his superstitious awe; and, on the present occasion, when he heard the melancholy notes of the great goat-sucker,* he immediately called my attention to it, as foreboding some heavy calamity.

"What am I to do, Hector?' said I. 'Go and tell Indian John to shoot it.'

"India John neber shoot him, massa,' he replied. 'Yabahou† take care o' dat. See, massa, Indian John sit dere and look like Yabahou heself.'

"I looked in the direction pointed out, and saw the person he had mentioned squatting down by the fire, with his elbows resting on his knees and his head supported in his hands. His eyes were fixed, his countenance unmoved, and in the red glare of the flames, he certainly did have something of an appearance unallied to human nature.

"What is the matter, John?' I inquired; 'is the camp all safe?'

"John is an old man,' he replied, 'and has seen many eyes closed in slumber that have never again

* This bird is about the size of an owl, and those who have once heard its cry will never forget it. Indeed, few persons would conceive it to proceed from a bird, as it strongly resembles the suppressed sighs or dying groans of some poor victim, yielding up his existence beneath the dagger of an assassin.

† Yabahou is the name given by the Indians to the Evil Spirit, as Jumbo is by the negroes.

opened to the light of the sun. Kururumanny* is a great Spirit, and his hand covers our heads in darkness as in day."

" 'What do you apprehend, then, John?' said I. 'Is the lightning gathering its arrows in the caves of the mountains? or is the storm gaining strength upon the bosom of the deep? The Great Spirit ruleth over all, and we, as creatures of the dust, must bend before his power.'

" 'My brother is a great medicine,' returned the Indian, 'he is wise, and knoweth all things. Does he not hear the wail of desolation, and is not the cry of sorrow in the air?'

" 'I hear but the plaintive notes of a simple bird,' said I. 'We are children of the Great Spirit, and our Father careth for us all.'

" 'My brother is wise,' replied the other; 'Kururumanny is our head, but Yabahou is the parent of groans and tears. He shooteth his arrows, and the Wourali† destroyeth the life. He bendeth his bow, and who can tell where the arrow shall fly? The face of my father is dark; the days of the habettoo‡ are numbered.'

"The poor bird had repeatedly reiterated his mournful aspirations, but though the Indian seemed to dread its effects, yet not a muscle of his countenance underwent the smallest change. It was not so, however, with Hector. He had been early taught to consider that the notes of this really harmless creature, when heard near the habitations of man, was a certain prelude to misfortune, and that the bird was the receptacle of the departed souls of cruel and hard-hearted masters.

" 'Ky, massa,' said the negro, whilst the goat-sucker was making a particularly long and plaintive

* Kururumanny, signifying the Father, is the god of the Arawaks.

† Wourali, a deadly poison.

‡ Old man.

moan; 'ky, massa, you no hear him Massa Riley groan dere, eh? 'Spose massa got him cock-a-lorum here, ebery ting right?

"It was with difficulty I could refrain from laughing; but my importance required gravity of aspect, and preserving it as well as I could, I rolled myself in my hammock. Hector pulled the painted canvas over it, and I was soon in a deep sleep.

"The earliest peep of dawn was announced by the smaller species of goat-suckers distinctly articulating, 'Who are you? Who-who-who are you?' and in a few minutes the whole encampment was in motion. I threw off my covering; Hector was ready to attend me, and I stood beneath the wide-spreading foliage of the towering mora to make my toilette. Indian John still retained his seat, nor could I perceive the smallest alteration in his attitude of the night before, nor any appearance of animation, except an occasional twinkle of the eyes.

"Whilst I was hastily putting on a light garment, for the purpose of bathing in a small creek adjacent, a corporal brought me the melancholy tidings that two of our party who had been sleeping in the open air, had been found without any signs of existence, and several others were complaining of fever and ague. Indian John must have heard the communication, but he did not betray the slightest indication that he was aware of its purport: he sat like a statue.

"I lost no time in hastening to the tents, and there indeed lay two of my unfortunate and misguided comrades, in whom life was totally extinct. They were both young men, and had been full of health and vigour; but their own folly had snapped asunder the cords of vitality, and death had seized his victims. About a dozen others were in a state which precluded all possibility of their proceeding, and I was under the necessity of remaining with my patients till conveyances could be procured from the nearest plantation

to carry them back. A corporal, six privates, as many negroes, and three Indians, including old John, were my companions.

"After ablution and a hasty breakfast, the bugles sounded 'Forward!' and the little army pursued its way, anxious to take as much advantage of the cool morning air as was possible. Then came our melancholy task to bury the dead; for it would not have been practicable to send them back to George Town, on account of the rapidity of decomposition in this hot climate. The negroes dug a grave, and before the sun had reached its meridian height, the bodies were committed to the earth, at no great distance from the spot where it was suspected Riley had been murdered.

"No regular service was read at the interment, but a short prayer was offered up for the living, and a few observations made to the memory of the dead. The ground was then heaped upon their remains, and the negroes staked the grave round with branches cut from the trees, and shorn of their leaves. On the following morning, another victim to intemperance was added to the number; and thus perished three individuals, whose parents and friends were perhaps at that very moment exulting in the hopes of their prosperity.

"About noon, another surgeon, with negroes, arrived; and as soon as the intense heat had a little subsided, I proceeded to follow the party that was in advance. There was no difficulty, even to a European, in knowing the trail, for it was quite broad enough, and we continued our progress through the woods, till night once more compelled us to halt. Again the great goat-sucker uttered his funereal plaints, and again old John (who was really very aged) took his seat by the fire, exclaiming, 'The face of my father is dark! the days of the habettoo are numbered!' There was a deep melancholy, mingled with calm resignation in the manner of the Indian,

that made an unusual impression upon my mind. He had shown no symptoms of illness beyond the decay of nature, nor did there seem to be any immediate prospect of dissolution; yet every time the voice of the bird was heard, he continued to repeat, 'The days of the habottoo are numbered!' Accustomed as I had been to hear tales of Indian sagacity, still I saw nothing here to verify the predictions of the old man, and therefore I attributed his exclamation to the superstition of his tribe. Strange, however, as it may appear, his prediction was verified, and that too in a very remarkable manner.

"About midnight I was awoke from a sound sleep by something shaking my hammock; but on looking out, there was nothing visible except Indian John by the fire, and Hector, wrapped up in a double blanket and painted canvas lying near him. I was again composing myself, when another shake induced me to look at the clews by which the hammock was suspended, when I discovered near my head a rough-looking animal, of what kind I could not exactly tell; but rather startled at his neighbourhood, I got out of the hammock. Indian John raised his head, and his eyes looked dull and heavy; but in an instant a brightness flashed over them, his spring from the ground towards me was like the bound of an antelope, and by the force of his blow I was thrown several feet from the place where I had been standing, and laid insensible for about five minutes, through striking my head against the stump of a tree. On recovering from my stupor, Hector was supporting me on the ground, and I felt a dizzy and sickening sensation. Figures were moving about in the dim light of the fire, and, stretched at full length, with his face downwards, lay the old Indian. Returning recollection brought back past occurrences, and raising myself up, I approached old John with no small degree of resentment for his suspected treachery. The fire was stirred up, and gave forth its red flame;

militia-men and negroes gathered round, when grasping John's arm I shook it violently; no resistance was made, it fell motionless to the ground,—the Indian was dead.

"My command to lift the body up was instantly obeyed. One of the hands clutched a bloody knife; the other, even in death, grasped the neck of a labarri snake (one of the most poisonous reptiles in all Guiana), which the Indian had destroyed, and in turn became the victim of its bite. In an instant the whole truth rushed upon my mind. I had got out of my hammock to avoid the animal (which I afterwards found was nothing more than a three-toed sloth), and in doing so had disturbed the snake, which had coiled itself up near the fire. The creature, fearing an attack, was elevating its head for the purpose of becoming the assailant; poor old John saw this, and mustering the last effort of his strength, he sprang forward, dashed me away, and himself received the deadly bite; but it would appear that he had caught the reptile, and almost with his last struggle had cut its throat.

"Such a mark of devotedness could not fail to produce the strongest gratitude in my heart; nor was there one present, except the Indians, who did not express their warmest admiration at this generous act. It is probable, however, that old John trusted to his activity to seize the snake a little below the jaws, and thus prevent its doing any mortal injury; but the peril in which I was placed, and the imperfections of age, had foiled his attempt, and his life became the sacrifice. The labarri was rather more than seven feet in length. I had it flayed, and sent the skin to a friend in England.

"The other two Indians that were in our company took their aged companion, and having smeared the body with their war-paint, placed him with his back against a tree; his bow and arrows were laid on one side, and his gun on the other. They then took a

position at his feet, looking intensely at the dead man's face, but without betraying the smallest emotion of sorrow. First one Indian commenced a kind of running song, in a low but pleasing voice, and then the other frequently took up the strain in a bolder style. From what little I understood of the language, they were enumerating the excellent qualities of old John, and chanting a sort of memoir of his life. When any particular action was recorded by the first, the second affirmed it with energy; and both of them deplored the time when the white man brought the fire-water* to their land.

"Thus they continued till near daybreak, when the tolling of a distant bell was distinctly heard, and it sounded deep and sonorous like a funeral knell. The Indians ceased, but still continued gazing on the corpse. Again the bell repeated its solemn tones, whilst the most perfect silence was maintained by every soul present. I knew that we could not be less than twenty miles from the nearest plantation, nor had I ever heard the sound of such a bell in any part of the colony. Circumstances had crowded so thick upon me, that for a few minutes I could hardly divest my mind of doubts that witchcraft was busy in these forest depths; but they were, however, soon dispelled by an old negro, who had travelled much into the interior, exclaiming,—

"Hark! de campanero† peak de Indian talk! He tell 'em de Good Spirit come for take old John to better hunting-ground."

"This was the first time I had heard the campanero, and the solemn but romantic toll of his voice well accorded with the spectacle before me. As soon as

* Rum.

† A bird about the size of a jay, of snow-white plumage. His note, which exactly resembles the tolling of a convent-bell, may be distinctly heard at the distance of three miles. It is a solitary creature, and his nest has never been discovered in any part of Guiana.

daylight appeared, the Indians wished to be left alone, and therefore I removed, by their directions, to another spot. In about an hour they joined us, and we pursued our march, so that what became of the corpse I never could discover; but the poison had operated so powerfully, that it was far advanced in decay when we came away. Our path lay through an intricate wood, but our pioneers had left us a good passage, and we advanced without any degree of difficulty.

"About mid-day we came to a broad, deep, and rapid stream; and here we halted till the intense heat of the sun had become somewhat subdued, when we again resumed our march along the banks, till we arrived at a part where our comrades must have either crossed over, or gone down with the current in canoes,—the latter was the most probable, as no canoes were visible on the opposite shore. Here the loss of Indian John was made very manifest, for the other two guides turned sulky, and seemed careless about directing us any farther; indeed, what they had witnessed had raised a dread upon their minds, and it was evident to me that they would leave us the first opportunity that offered. I accordingly ordered the two tents we had with us to be pitched, and took up my station for the night.

"Nothing could exceed the beauty of the spot we were then in; for, after the negroes had used their cutlasses to cut away the bush-rope* and underwood, there was a delightful harbour formed by the closely-interwoven branches above and the thick bush around, that would baffle mere description. The water,

* The bush-rope is a sort of vine, which runs up the tallest trees like strands in a cable; and then again descending to the earth, strikes root and re-ascends. Some of the branches are nearly as thick round as a man's body, others are much smaller; and they become so interwoven, that the forest in many places would be impassable, but for the negroes cutting them away. It is used by the wood-cutters in hauling out their timber.

which, by the way, was fresh, gave a pleasant coolness to the air, and, in the course of a very short time, supplied us with abundance of fish. Birds of the most beautiful plumage were flashing to and fro in the sun, dazzling the eyes with their brilliancy, and a few indulged us with a simple melody. Not a cloud veiled the deep intense blue transparency of the sky. A fine breeze shook the foliage and wafted the odours from the flowers, and the place might truly be pronounced an earthly paradise.

"Here, then, we passed the night, though not unfrequently disturbed by the cayman, who rose to the surface of the water, and emitted his singular noise, which strongly resembles a suppressed sigh, but so loud that it may be heard nearly a mile off. The red monkey, too, was vociferous in his complainings; and we could hear the roar of the jaguar* at no great distance in the woods. I know not whether it is the spirit of enterprise, or the peculiarity of the situation, which does away with all sensations of fear, but certain it is, that I have felt more alarm at reading of such adventures than ever I experienced whilst actually engaged in them; the heart seems to love the danger in proportion as it increases, and undauntedly refuses to shrink back in the moment of peril. In fact, nothing can exceed the romantic enthusiasm which the depths of the forests in Guiana excites in an ardent mind.

"The 'Willy-come-go—Willy-come-go,' told us of approaching day with his usual plaintive voice; and, after packing up, we waited in expectation that the Indians, who had gone away for that purpose, would return with a corial,† or a canoe, to ferry us over. In about an hour after sunrise we heard them paddling up the stream; and their return gave me hopes that our main body was not far off, else, in all

* The tiger of South America.

† Corial is a canoe formed from the single trunk of a tree.

probability, they would have deserted us where we were. In the course of a short time we were all embarked in a good-sized canoe, and shot down the creek with amazing rapidity.

"I will not tire you by repeating the succession of adventures which happened for three days more; but at the expiration of that time our guides deserted us, and we were left in the very heart of this world of forests, to find our way out in the best manner we could. Indeed, I am convinced that they purposely led us astray, under the hope that we could not escape, and death would put them in possession of our arms, for they never afterwards made their appearance in the colony, and I was told that the safety of all was attributed to my exalted character as a *pe-i-man*, or magician.

"Well, here I was, with seven whites and seven negro slaves, nobody knew where; and I must acknowledge, that not a few gloomy anticipations of the future sadly depressed my spirits, and hung their cold damp webs around my heart. Still it would not do to yield to anything like despondency; so I determined to rest my men for the day, and on the following morning to commence exploring this vast wilderness. There was now but little underwood; the tall *mora* towered above a hundred feet into the air; the trees seemed to enjoy an eternal spring, and the foliage presented almost every variety of hue, from the lightest green to the darkest shade of purple. Lovely blossoms curled round the loftiest boughs, and wantoned in the breeze, whilst the birds and the monkeys passed from branch to branch, in constant activity, to eat the fruits. The foliage was so thick, as to be nearly impervious to the sun's rays, and there was, consequently, a pleasant and bold twilight all around, except where some tall giant of the wood had been rooted up by the tempest, and, till his place was supplied by another, the solar rays penetrated through the vacant space.

"The day of halting passed away pleasantly enough, notwithstanding the awkwardness of our situation; we felt assured there could be no want of food whilst our powder and shot lasted; water there was no fear of obtaining, and dry wood lay scattered about in abundance to light our fires; thus we determined to live like merry foresters, and make the best of a bad job, especially as we were perfectly satisfied the Indians were gone never to return.

"During the night, however, I was restless and uneasy, and felt something of the same sort of sensation which the captain of a ship would feel, if suddenly deprived of his pilot in the midst of rocks and shoals. Thousands of fireflies shot to and fro, displaying their sparkling lamps, and looking like glittering gems amid the dark green leaves. The great goat-sucker emitted his mournful sound; and with a sickening of heart I saw the camoudi snake* drag his huge length along the ground. Had he twisted himself about my hammock, I must have been crushed to pieces; but, to my surprise, he passed swiftly on. The riddle was, however, soon solved; for, within a few yards of his tail, came the splendid counacouchi,† brilliant with all the colours of the rainbow, and ready to instil the deadly venom into his victim. The hissing of these monsters I shall never forget,—it made my very blood curdle in my veins.

"Morning came at last, and nature once more looked luxuriantly rich in her variegated mantle. We

* The Spaniards in the Oroonoke assert that this snake grows to the length of seventy or eighty feet, and that he is capable of destroying the strongest and largest bull. They call him "mata-tauro," or bull-killer. In Guiana they have been seen above forty feet, and several have been killed about thirty-five feet long.

† This beautiful, but deadly poisonous snake, grows to the length of about fourteen or fifteen feet. The negroes call it the "bushmaster," as it is a terror to every living thing besides.

struck our tents, packed our provisions, and began our path, stretching away to the south-west. Except here and there meeting with a piece of swampy ground, and having to cross two or three small creeks, the march of this day had nothing very remarkable to record. At night our tents were again pitched, and I believe the whole of us slept soundly. The return of day renewed our toil; and, after a very fatiguing march, night once more brought us rest. But we had now emerged from the forest, and were upon a broad savanna, more elegant than the finest cultivated park the whole of Europe could produce. Delightfully refreshing to the sight, and almost enchanting to the sense, it was with grief we saw the sun go down on this lovely plain; and highly gratified were the whole of us, when his early beams again permitted us to behold it. But other thoughts obtruded. If we attempted to cross it, the burning heat of a meridian sun might produce fever, after having been so many hours in a rather humid atmosphere. Happily, through the precautions I had taken, not one of our small party complained of indisposition, and I feared to hazard the experiment of leaving the woods; so skirting by the side of this lovely expanse, I kept as near as possible in my old direction.

"About four o'clock in the afternoon, we found ourselves on the banks of one of the numerous tributary rivers that flow through all parts of this continent. The current was not very rapid, nor did it appear deeper than would allow us to ford; but it being too late to make the experiment, we chose a spot upon the skirts of the savanna, and once more hung up our hammocks. The sun was descending to the horizon, and the whole expanse of heaven was one bright glow: never did my heart exult so much in any scene as that which now presented itself, but which it would be utterly impossible to describe. We gathered round our evening meal, when, to my utter astonishment, we discovered an addition to our

company. No one heard him approach, and no one was sensible of his presence until we saw him sitting amongst us; but a more revolting figure seldom had my eyes beheld.

"He was an Indian of a spare and meagre aspect; his long black hair hung down his back and shoulders in thickly-matted flakes; his rolling eyes seemed restless with frenzy; his hammock was ragged and torn; and his bow, though of excellent wood, was rough and unpolished. He spoke to no one, he noticed no one, but seized the food with avidity, and ate it voraciously. There was no mark or paint to tell the nation he belonged to, and he might, indeed, be truly styled the wild man of the woods. Our party looked at him with a secret awe, the negroes huddled together, and almost held their breath; but the stranger heeded it not, and though fifteen persons were close to him, he appeared as if he thought himself entirely alone. I motioned to the men not to interfere with him, but suffer him to do as he pleased, and carelessly placed a horn of brandy by his side, which he drank off without hesitation; then, retiring a short distance, he hung up his hammock and went to sleep.

"During all this time he had never once looked at one of us, nor did he, by the slightest inclination, seem at all sensible of our presence. Tales had been told in the colony of a being of this description; but they were of an extremely fabulous nature, full of horrible exaggerations, to terrify the negroes and prevent them from taking to the bush. That he was some poor unsettled wretch, I had no doubt; but I was also certain that he must be well acquainted with every part of the forest, and, in all probability, knew where our comrades at that moment were. I therefore gave directions to watch his proceedings, and endeavour, by gentle means, to keep him with us, but on no account to use restraint, as I was well aware that kindness might operate upon his nature to make him friendly and serviceable, whilst coercion would

only arouse all the mischievous propensities of the Indian to our hurt. In the latter case we might kill him; but nothing would compel him to act faithfully by those from whom he conceived he had received an injury.

"I awoke several times during the night, and looked towards the Indian's quarters; but his rest appeared to be unbroken, and only once did I detect the wild glare of his eye as it scanned through a hole in his hammock, which, lightened by the blaze of the fire, did not look much unlike a burning coal. The negroes had given him a very wide berth, for it was evident they were but little pleased with his company, and had I time, it would afford you much amusement to repeat all their strange and curious conjectures respecting him. Hector diverted me extremely; for, just previous to his rolling himself up in his blanket, I saw him pull out a book, which I immediately knew to be the treatise on mathematics, and looking into it, he kept repeating, 'Cock-a-lorum, top—cock-a-lorum, bottom. Good cock-a-lorum, take care o' poor negur!'

"On turning out in the morning, the Indian was sitting near the fire; but he had not taken down his hammock, which gave me hopes that he would be guided in his actions by ours. Food was placed near him, which he consumed; but at first I forbore giving him brandy, that I might try his temper. He seemed sensible of this neglect by the manner in which he eyed the horn; and having awakened something like intelligence in his mind, I poured out some of the liquor and handed it to him.

"'My brother has seen the tents of the pale-faces,' said I; 'but where there are numbers, there may be treachery.'

"He took the brandy, but offered no reply; and on our preparing to renew our march, he also did the same. We descended the banks of the river, and selected a spot for crossing where a gigantic tree had

fallen over the stream, so that its topmost boughs just touched the opposite side. The Indian stopped, and then advancing in front, struck the trunk with his bow, and the part immediately crumbled away, showing us its state of rottenness, and that, in all probability, in a few hours more it would be floating down the current. He then returned up the bank, and, proceeding at a brisk pace, took his way into the wood. We followed his steps, and in about an hour and a half came to the river again at a different place, where a corial lay concealed beneath the branches that overhung the stream. In a short time we were all safe over, and the Indian shot his light boat once more to its hiding-place, where he carefully arranged the foliage, so as to shut it in from being seen. I now expected he would leave us; but, cutting a long pole, he thrust it in every direction into the water for about a hundred feet above and below where we had crossed; he then plunged into the water, and was soon by our side. He now took the lead, and it became evident that he was following a trail, but whether one which had been made by himself or by another person, we none of us could tell. He looked carefully at the low boughs, and every now and then found a sure guide, by observing that a twig had been broken and hung down; then again he would examine the damp, withered leaves upon the ground for the prints of footsteps, frequently passing his hand over any that he found, with the most delicate touch, and scrutinizing every part with the closest attention. It was past mid-day when he made a sudden stop, and looking wildly around, he bounded into the bush and disappeared. I was not without hopes of his return, and therefore halted for some time; but finding the day wane apace, I determined to remain for the night. The spot, however, was not exactly convenient for the purpose; so, taking Hector with me, I set out to explore the neighbourhood for one better adapted.

"After advancing a few paces, Hector caught hold

of my arm, exclaiming, in an under voice, 'Tan, massa; me see de black cat * dere in de bush;' and he pointed to a dark place where there certainly appeared to be something resembling the animal he mentioned; but the object was so perfectly motionless, that I at once decided it was merely a collection of leaves and dead wood that had been driven by the winds into a heap, and, adhering together through the damp nature of the ground, was formed into one solid mass.

" 'It is only a lump of pegas,† you blockhead,' said I; 'but I really wish some animal would jump out upon you, for your cowardice.'

" 'Him neber *pig* dat, massa,' replied the negro, shuddering; 'me see him eye for true, and no more like *pig* dan turtle like alligator.'

" 'Ay, ay,' rejoined I, 'you will see his nose and his tail too, if you look long enough. But, do you stay and watch it,' I continued whilst walking on, 'till I come back; and if it should jump, call out, and I'll come and shoot it.'

" Hector shook his head and kept close to me, till we found a place suitable for halting, about half a mile from where I had left the party. Having accomplished this, we returned the same way we had advanced, and on approaching the covert where Hector had fancied he saw the black cat, the same object was conspicuous in the gloom. It certainly had a very curious appearance, but its form and situation were unchanged from that in which we had first seen it; and, notwithstanding Hector's strong wish to send a ball in that direction, I was passing on without further notice.

" 'Do tan, dear massa, littly bit,' said the black imploringly; 'me want de cat's skin for mat to put in massa's gig.'

* A species of tiger, about the size of a Newfoundland dog, perfectly black, and of an untameable nature.

† Vegetable mould, made by dead grass and leaves.

" 'You will persist that it is a cat, then,' I replied. 'You have got your cutlass; go and kill it.'

" 'Spouse him no cat, massa; him debbil for true,' answered Hector.

" 'Well, if that is the case,' said I, 'Hector, we will have a shot, and see what he is made of.' I raised my rifle, and was bringing the butt to my shoulder, when the mass burst into instant motion, and upright sprang an Indian.

" 'Me tell you, massa, debbil lay dere,' said Hector, chuckling at his own penetration. 'Where do pig lib now?'

" The Indian fearlessly advanced, and I knew him to be of the Accaway * tribe by the lump of anatto stuck upon the hair over his forehead, with which these people paint themselves, both to strike terror to their enemies, and as a defence from the bite of insects by its properties. It immediately occurred to me, that the wandering stranger was a Macusi † Indian, and that he had detected the Accaway, and hastened from his terrible presence; the Accaways making the Macusi slaves whenever they can catch them.

" 'Does the pale-face look for dogs?' said the Indian. 'The Macusi will show him where they feed; the carrion is at hand.'

" 'The pale-faces seek their friends,' replied I; 'the hatchet is buried, and the nations smoke the pipe of peace.'

* The Accaways are amongst the bravest and most determined of the Indian tribes, and are dreaded by all the others. They sometimes journey for two and three months together, and when they approach a village that is weak, no matter to what nation it belongs, it is immediately attacked and plundered.

† The Macusi Indians are the weakest of all the tribes, and let who will go to war, they are sure to suffer. The Accaways and Caribisee make them slaves, and not unfrequently expeditions are sent to the Macusi villages; the peaceable inhabitants are seized and sold to the Portuguese.

" 'My brother is a chief,' said he, pointing to my dress. 'When were the dogs of Accaways at peace? The Macusi are a brave people, and their hunting-grounds is in the mountains.'

"The wily Indian wished to deceive me respecting his tribe, that he might the more readily ascertain my views, and the cause of our martial array; he therefore abused his own nation, and praised the Macusi, whom he despised.

" 'All the red-skins are our brothers,' I continued; 'but the lying tongue is forked, and speaks two ways.'

" 'The pale-face is a chief,' he rejoined, 'and his talk is right. But the dogs of Accaways have dug up the hatchet, and its edge is red. Does my brother come to help the Macusi? If so, he is welcome.'

" 'We seek not the red-skins,' I answered, 'and the Accaways are our friends. They are swifter than the cabeyta,* and terrible as the gonamaru;† their eyes are ercemah,‡ and their yaboorey§ are sinewy as the bush-rope. Their poolewah|| is sure, and their coreybah¶ abides in strength. My brother is an Accaway, and needs not the cassique's** voice, nor the counacouchi's tongue.'

"The Indian was greatly flattered by my description, but he suppressed all outward tokens of his satisfaction, merely replying, 'The pale-faces are welcome. What can the Accaway do for his friends?'

"We returned to our party, and, the Indian becoming our guide, we were in about half an hour within sight of one of their temporary villages. The houses resembled a bell-tent, made by poles slanting from the ground and meeting in an apex, and the

* Lightning.

† Thunder.

‡ The stars.

§ Arms.

|| Arrow.

¶ Bow.

** Mocking bird.

whole were thatched with palm-leaves. Our reception was most hospitable, and each one vied with the other in paying us attention. A council was held, and I related sufficient of my situation to induce them to provide guides, under the promise of a handsome reward. They had seen nothing of our main body, but were not altogether unacquainted with its destination—at least, so they asserted; and on the following morning we bade them farewell, taking two of their people to direct us, one of whom was the Indian we had first discovered.

"I now found we had to retread a considerable portion of the ground we had already passed over, though not exactly in the same steps. We then took a direction more westerly, and with, comparatively speaking, but little difficulty, through the excellent management of our guides. A little before sunset, we struck a trail that had been newly made, and the Indians, after carefully examining it, declared the footsteps were those of negroes, who could not be far distant. We therefore made a vigorous push to come up with them, even after dark; but nature required repose, and we once more stopped for daylight. Before the sun arose, we were again on the alert; but whilst preparing to march, we heard the wild and sweet notes of the mocking-bird, which were occasionally intermingled with the imitation of some domestic animal. His own song is short, but full of melody; yet whatever sounds he hears, he immediately drops his own notes, and correctly mocks the intrusion; then comes his own song again, and so he continues for hours.

"On the present occasion, our Indian friends listened with almost breathless attention; for, mingled with the lay of the cassique, it was evident he was imitating the bleating of sheep, and not unfrequently the noise of Guinea fowls. The Indians consulted together in their own language, and their conversation was extremely energetic, each apparently advocating

a particular course, and trying to persuade the other to adopt it. At length they became more settled, and the one we had first seen (who called himself Wartuh) quitted us, and as his agile form passed amongst the intricate windings of the bush, he afforded a fine picture for the artist.

"I knew that the mocking-bird generally built his nest near the habitations of man; but I also knew that he came to the forest for his food, and therefore, whether we were near an Indian settlement, or the bird was seeking nourishment, remained a matter of doubt, though I rather inclined to the former opinion, on account of the creature producing sounds that must have interfered with his song. Whilst puzzling my mind with conjectures, I heard the bark of a dog, and a pretty little creature, of the Italian greyhound species, suddenly bounded in amongst us, but was again retreating, as if alarmed to find himself in such company. I tried to coax the animal to me, but it was at first extremely shy; in a few minutes, however, it listened to my voice, and cautiously approached. The sight of the dog seemed perfectly familiar to me, but I could not call to recollection where I had seen it; the creature, too, began to claim acquaintance with me, and after smelling around my person, jumped upon me and capered about with the most extravagant demonstrations of pleasure. He then ran up to Hector, and saluted him in a similar manner; whilst the poor fellow, with more tenderness than ever I gave him credit for, shed tears as he exclaimed, 'Gor Amighty peak dere, massa! Da brute hab heart for know poor negur still.'

"'It does, indeed, seem to know us both,' said I. 'Hector, I remember the creature somewhere, but my memory goes no further.'

"'Ky!' exclaimed the negro, as he brushed the dog away, who had sprung upon his shoulders whilst he was stooping, and begun licking his face; 'Ky! you saucy missy! Down, Celia, down!'

"The faithful fellow gave me an expressive look, which I instantly comprehended. The beautiful little animal had been a favourite of poor Celia's, but was missing from the time of her leaving the plantation. It also bore her name, and I had often played with it when I visited the manager. Many confused and conflicting ideas came rushing upon my mind. I rose up, beckoned Hector to follow me, and the dog seeing us on the point of moving, bounded away in the direction in which he had first appeared. This was what I expected and wished, and as he occasionally started on before us and then gambolled back again, I felt assured the mystery would be soon unravelled. In about ten minutes we heard a female voice, calling the greyhound by its name, and through a break in the wood I saw such a lovely scene as will never be crased from my mind.

"A space of considerable extent had been cleared of the trees, and was planted with rice, Indian corn, and plantains. Rows of cocoanut-trees were visible about the centre, and the calabash-tree and papau apple were growing in rich luxuriance. The yellow orange looked beautiful amongst the green leaves, whilst bright and resplendent flowers adorned several spots that were laid out for gardens. The smoke curled above the trees, and the tops of several huts or cottages, neatly thatched, were seen in different parts of the plantation. The whole must have been the work of many years, and whilst I stood gazing at it, Hector whispered, "Look dere, massa; dere Missy Celia herself, 'pon a my word and honour!"

"I looked, and there, sure enough, I saw the poor girl, with an infant in her arms, coming down between two plots of plantain-trees, calling to her dog. The animal bounded away towards her mistress, and then frisked back again to the place of our concealment, and made a whining noise as if to entice her to the spot. The poor girl was cautiously approaching, when I felt something press my foot, and looking

down, a cougar* lay crouched just behind me. It had come so noiselessly, that neither Hector nor I had heard it, and I was about to spring through the opening; when the head of the animal was raised, and beneath its jaws I saw the sparkling eyes of the Indian, who had so completely disguised himself in the cougar's skin, as to deceive a much quicker eye than mine. He motioned me to fall back, and the dog once more coming to the place, turned tail on seeing this resemblance of a beast, and ran howling back to her mistress, who hastily took her way to the huts.

"I had now seen enough to explain to me how matters stood. This was a settlement of runaway slaves, and here Sam had brought Celia. The Indian threw off the skin of the cougar, and came towards us; but, to my astonishment, he was a stranger in the war-paint of the Arawaaks, and fully equipped for some deadly affray. Before any explanation could ensue, I heard a discharge of musketry on my right, and looking towards the place, saw about fifty of our main body pouring in upon the plantation. I directed Hector and the Indian to go back and bring up my party, whilst I rushed forward under a hope of rescuing some of the poor wretches from death. The plan was, however, more to terrify than to destroy, and had it not been for some of the negroes discovering our troops in an ambushment, the place would have been invested without firing a shot. I grieve to say that policy, more than humanity, had the greater influence in this arrangement; for the negroes were valuable, and if taken alive, any one the government chose to execute as a warning to the rest, his worth would be estimated by a legalized scale, and the amount paid from the colonial chest to the master from whom he had deserted.

"The wretched creatures were wholly unprepared,

* A species of tiger.

but about twenty, with Sam at their head, formed a compact body, having the women in the rear; and being well armed, would have sold their lives very dearly, if attacked. From the station I had taken, I was much nearer to the huts than any one else, and therefore I hastened forward to apprise the commander of the position the negroes had taken. He assured me it was his wish to spare the effusion of blood, and I was commissioned to try and effect a surrender on the part of Sam and his companions. On passing one of the huts, rather smaller than the rest, the door of which was well secured, I heard the voice of an Englishman loudly vociferating to be let out. I lost no time in undoing the fastenings (though more than one shot whistled past me whilst thus engaged), and having succeeded in opening the entrance, a man sprang forth, whom I instantly recognized to be the lost Riley.

"The negroes, who were strongly posted, made a desperate and determined rush towards us; and our party fearing to fire, lest either of us should be injured, were constrained to see us carried off as prisoners. Sam soon recognized me, and I endeavoured to impress upon his mind the utter inutility of resistance. He seemed fully aware of the truth of this, but still thought, by having Riley and myself in his possession, he might make better terms. I told him that I was empowered to offer them life, if they would lay down their arms; and at the same time, I promised to do all in my power to keep them from punishment. Riley was as abject in distress as he had been haughty in prosperity; and one condition Sam insisted upon, that in case of yielding himself up, he should not be compelled to remain on the same estate as Riley. Of course, I could not pledge myself beyond my commission, but offered to convey his proposals to the commanding officer. This he assented to; and therefore, returning to the main body, I made such representations to the major, that he readily—

too readily I found afterwards—agreed to everything, so that he could but get the runaways into his power.

“In short, after a couple of hours’ negotiation, everything was settled, and the negroes gave up their arms. Contrary, however, to stipulation, no sooner had they surrendered, than the whole were seized and pinioned back to back; they were then thrust into two of the huts, and fastened up. I remonstrated with the commanding officer, who replied warmly, and acknowledged that he had only employed subterfuge to effect his purpose—that he alone was accountable to the governor and the colony, and he would take care to teach the rascals such a lesson, as would deter others from bushranging. I saw that further interference was useless, and therefore refrained from urging him, lest the spirit of contradiction, which was his peculiar characteristic, should induce him to act with yet greater severity towards his wretched prisoners. But I was determined to do all in my power to alleviate their misfortunes, without departing from my strict line of duty; and I was well aware that, in my medical capacity, I could secure to them many indulgences which they would not otherwise enjoy. We found that this negro colony had been established seventeen years, and the owners of several of the runaways were dead. There were altogether about fifty prisoners, men, women, and children; and the ground they had occupied was not only well cultivated, but the gardens tastefully laid out, and the huts, lightly built after the fashion of the Indians, had a very neat and pretty appearance. They had several sheep, a great number of goats, and a good stock of poultry. All the tropical fruits were growing in abundance. In short, a more complete establishment I never beheld; and I afterwards heard from Sam, that the colony was governed by the most simple regulations for mutual preservation and for self-defence.

"The purpose of the expedition being now fully accomplished, and the whole of the deserters in our power, the troops were quartered in the different huts, to repose them after their toil; and as the stores of the negroes were amply supplied, it was proposed to pass a few days in this beautiful sequestered spot, which, without Indian sagacity, would have never been discovered.

"On mustering our force, I found that very little more than one-third of the men had been able to hold out to the end. Two had died, and the remainder been compelled to return through sickness and fever, brought on by fatigue. The Indian guides had gone off at different times, till only five remained, and the whole party had suffered much from the want of provisions.

"Sheep, pigs, poultry, plantains, and the whole stock of the negroes were put in immediate requisition, and food in abundance was speedily prepared. This continued for two days, and on the third the work of destruction commenced. The plantations were cut down, and the refuse piled in heaps: the gardens were laid waste, and, in the course of a few hours, all was one scene of wreck and ruin.

"It would be impossible to describe the agony of those, by whose labours this spot had once smiled in bright luxuriance. They saw the devastation that was going on, they saw that every hope had perished, and the sweet enjoyments of the past were fearfully contrasted with the dark prospects of future slavery.

"On the fourth day, all was ready for the march; the runaway slaves were coupled together by cords, and drawn up on the skirts of their once happy home, to see the finishing stroke executed by the hand of the destroyer. The poor wretches gazed in speechless horror, as they saw the clouds of smoke and flame arise that were for ever to sweep away their former peaceful dwellings. Deep melancholy took

possession of their features, though at times the contracted brow and ferocious look plainly told what was passing in the heart. By particular favour from the commanding officer, I had obtained permission for Sam and Celia to be together; and their devoted attention to the infant, as well as their struggles to keep from each other the agony which tortured them both, presented a picture of affection that flowed from the purest of nature's sources, and could not have been surpassed even in the most refined state of civilized society. At length we began our march, and in six days arrived safely in the town with our captives, who were all consigned to the jail.

"On the following morning they were taken before the fiscal; and here the fact came out, that Sam had no hand in carrying off Riley, nor was he aware of the circumstance till he saw him at the plantation. Indeed, it had been more a matter of accident than design; for some of the runaways having been in the neighbourhood to purchase powder and other articles, were returning home, when Riley saw and fired at them. They retreated to the thicket, and from thence returned the fire, which wounded him, but not so severely as the quantity of blood upon the ground seemed to indicate. He was, however, dismounted from his horse, and a severe contest took place, in which two out of the three Indians were deeply wounded; but they ultimately mastered him. At first they proposed to kill him outright; but at last they agreed to carry him to the colony, and leave his fate in the hands of their governor. This they performed, and had only arrived about three days before us. Indignation was strongly excited against the tyrannical oppressor, who pleaded hard for his life, and humbled himself to go down on his knees to Sam, imploring that he would protect him. He was placed in confinement, and his fate undecided, when the troops opportunely released him from his unpleasant and precarious situation.

"Contrary to the agreement made at the surrender, the captives were sent back to jail, flogged and branded, nor did even Celia escape from this disgraceful punishment. After undergoing the lash more than once or twice, and suffering six month's imprisonment, those who were claimed were sent back to their plantations, and those whose owners were dead, were taken possession of as crown slaves, and sent to the workhouse.*

"Sam and Celia returned to Providence; but he had become a moody, melancholy man, brooding over his misfortunes, and planning schemes of vengeance for his wrongs. His father, poor old Jack, the captain of the sloop, endeavoured to interest the planters in his behalf; but, from a mistaken system of policy, they thought that any interference on their part would operate on the minds of the slaves in general, to render them less obedient. Thus the wretched man was left to his fate, and frequently suffered from the driver's whip. Celia was fast sinking under her accumulating sorrows, when the insurrection broke out on the east coast, and Sam was one of the first to become a leader. Every white and coloured free man of the colony was called out, and took up arms; for, had the insurrection spread, European power would have been at an end. The odds were tremendous—about three thousand against seventy thousand. The negroes had not, however, sufficiently organized their plan, and were defeated. The ringleaders were taken, and after a trial before a military tribunal, were sentenced to die. Sam was amongst the number, and his mind seemed to shrink under the thoughts of execution. His father visited the sinking man, and the revered clergyman endeavoured to instil into his heart those important truths which prepare us for another and a better world. I was present at his last

* This is a sort of penitentiary, or bridewell, where negroes are worked in chains for petty felonies, running away, &c.

interview with the broken-hearted Celia, and never shall I forget the affecting scene. I am an old West-Indian, and have served in the army; but really I do not think I ever felt so heart-sick in the whole course of my life. Sam was stern—almost sullen; and whilst the heart-broken but still highly-interesting girl hung round his neck, he scarcely returned her embrace. But to a close observer, the quivering lip, the contracted muscles of the face, and the suppressed sob, plainly told the agony that was shaking his strong frame.

“The clergyman had a difficult and delicate task to perform, but he sacrificed all selfish considerations, and faithfully discharged his duty. The negroes had been sentenced to undergo the termination of existence, and several persons had also tried to persuade them that eternal punishment in another world would be their portion. The clergyman not only pointed to an hereafter of peace and joy; but he endeavoured to direct them in the way to obtain it. He unfolded the book of divine revelation, and comforted the mourners with a hope of re-union in heaven. Sam’s eyes glistened for a moment, and old feelings and affections seemed to revive in his breast. He clasped the fainting Celia in his arms, impressed a kiss upon her forehead, and then resigned her insensible form to some of the attendants, who conveyed her into the open air. I immediately followed, to direct the application of restoratives; my fingers were on her pulse; it beat for a few seconds—then fluttered—then beat again; it ceased—and life had fled for ever.

“The vociferations of the negroes betrayed the sad even to Sam, and he entreated and obtained permission to look at the corpse. He stood over the lifeless form of her he had so fondly loved; his eyes wildly glared on the calm expression death had left upon her face; he raised her hand in his own, and for several minutes remained as motionless as the inani-

mate body before him; then, once more kissing the forehead of the dead, he looked proudly around—a changed, an altered man.

“I had expected that this would have been the severest blow of all; but I was mistaken. From the first he had no fear of death; his wish to preserve life had alone been connected with her, who was now no more; his only dread, the apprehension that she would be left to the persecutions of the cruel Riley. All *that* was at an end, and he calmly returned to his cell, resigned to whatever might ensue.

“On the day of execution, the troops formed a square upon the parade-ground, having the gallows in the centre. Sam stood at the foot of the ladder, ready to ascend, when his father approached, and firmly grasped his hand. With a fixed and steady gaze they looked in each other’s face for about three minutes, and neither of them moved a limb or muscle. At the expiration of that time, without uttering one word, their hands separated; the father trod firmly through the inner ranks, and Sam mounted the ladder with a light and active step. Arrived near the top, he looked round upon the military *cordon* with a smile of triumph, and with that smile upon his countenance he was launched into eternity.

“The ringleaders were all executed and then decapitated, and their heads, with their features distorted by the death-agony, were placed upon the poles, where you saw them, except two or three, which are similarly exhibited on the east coast, near the plantation where the insurrection first broke out; and the old negroes keep alive the remembrance of their comrades’ fate, whilst at the same time they excite the feelings of the younger slaves to revenge, by repeating, whenever they can do so without fear of detection, the toast—
‘I DRINK TO HEADS!’”

The major ceased, and at that moment a little black urchin, quite naked, peeped in at the door; but find-

ing himself not observed or noticed, he exclaimed, whilst shaking his tiny fist and showing his white teeth with laughter, "Dam you!"

"Come here, Sam," said the major, laughing. "Come for sugar." The child ran up between his legs. "And this," continued the major, taking him up upon his knee, and giving him the promised sweet,—"this is Celia's child!"

BELVOIR CASTLE.



"MARK HIS CONDITION, AND THE EVENT; THEN TELL ME
IF THIS MIGHT BE A BROTHER."

BELVOIR CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

"Thus runs, indeed,
The world's commingled stream of love and hate!"

As the battle of Tewkesbury had trampled down the red-leaved rose of Lancaster, so did the battle of Bosworth-field triumph over the pale flower of the house of York. The sanguinary Richard, who plunged his soul into perdition for an earthly crown, fell in the deadly fray; and Richmond, in the hour of victory, had the same diadem placed upon his brow, stained as it was with blood and guilt. But the seventh Henry was wise and politic; he knew the miseries arising from internal strife, and therefore, to unite the interests of York and Lancaster, he married the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward the Fourth. Still, however, in an age when feuds ran high, and every baron was a petty monarch, frequent commotions threatened, not merely the peaceful village, but even the throne itself. The soldiers of Richard had fled from the field so fatal to their leader, to seek for shelter in the solitary glen, or thick embowered forest; and with the price of blood upon their heads, they afterwards united in companies of formidable banditti, bidding defiance to the laws, and levying contributions alike on friend and foe.

Nor were there wanting other causes to render the

throne of Henry insecure. An impostor was found to enact the part of the earl of Warwick, son to the duke of Clarence; and the earl of Lincoln, aiding the imposition, headed the rebel forces. The opposing armies met at Stoke, near Newark, and, after a bloody struggle, Henry was victorious.

From the earliest period of the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, civil strife had brought its baneful evils on kindred and on country, and beings, who had drawn their nourishment from the same breast in infancy, sought each other's life when arrived to all the strength of manhood.

Amongst the partisans who fought at Tewkesbury were two brothers,—the elder, Lord William de Roos, appeared on the side of Henry; and the younger, Rudolph, held a command in the army of the conquering Edward. The former fell in the heat of the engagement, though his body could not afterwards be found, and his only child, a son then about three years old, was left an orphan, his mother having died in giving him birth. The boy was at this time with his nurse, away from the castle of Belvoir; but a fatal distemper breaking out, he was numbered amongst the sacrifices, and Rudolph took possession as sole heir. The Baron Rudolph was a warrior of undaunted spirit, and had distinguished himself in many a time of peril; but from the very hour he fought at Tewkesbury he had become vindictive, harsh, and cruel; his wife had early fallen a prey to his severity, and only one daughter had blessed their union. In vain he sought for an alliance amongst the noble females of the land, and though graceful in person and dignified in manners, yet he could not find one heart that beat responsive to his own. His daughter, the Lady Isabelle, had been much neglected during the eventful period of intestine warfare, yet nature had been bountiful in all those softer feelings which harmonize the soul.

At the battle of Bosworth-field the baron had, in

the first instance, favoured the cause of Richard ; but, finding the day was likely to turn against them, he went over to the side of Henry, and mainly contributed to the fortune of the day. Still, as he bore the insignia of the crook-backed tyrant, his life was frequently endangered by the troops of Richmond, and he was eagerly sought for by his former companions in arms, who resolved to put him to death for his desertion.

It was on one of these occasions that, setting prudence at defiance, he rushed into the hottest of the fight, and saw most of his attendants fall around him. Still he continued the combat, till a heavy phalanx closed rapidly upon him, and death seemed inevitable. Wounded and fainting, his life hung trembling on the verge of eternity, and already the heavy sword was raised for his destruction ; when a youth of manly stature flung himself before the blow, and, warding off its fatal intent, brought his antagonist to the ground. He exhorted the baron to renewed exertion, and, fighting side by side, they resolved to die like men. But their efforts seemed in vain, and, only for the noble daring of the youth, the baron must have yielded ; when just at the moment hope was bidding them farewell, unlooked-for succour arrived, and they were rescued from their foes.

The baron was conveyed to a place of security, and when victory had crowned the day, he sent for the youth who had rendered him such timely aid. The messengers had difficulty in finding him, for he had laid aside his armour, and was presented before Rudolph dressed in the simple attire of a peasant. His age appeared to be under twenty, yet his figure was tall and finely formed. A feeling of scorn, mingled with humiliation, crept upon the noble's heart as he viewed the youth ; yet the conviction, that but for him his lifeless body must have been lying on the field of carnage, repressed the ill-timed jest that hung upon his tongue.

"Thou hast acted bravely," he exclaimed, "and the Baron de Roos knows how to reward thy merit. Here is gold for thee; it will well recruit thy wardrobe, and thou mayst——But how is this? Dost thou reject my proffered gift?"

The youth, who had hitherto stood silent, with his head crouched in humble attitude, now raised himself erect, and his eye and look bespoke his utter contempt for the glittering boon; but again sinking into his former position, he replied,

"My lord, I covet not the gold; to one whose wants are few it would be useless. Nature is bountiful, and from her stores I draw a plentiful supply. Yet, my lord, I am not ungrateful for the offer; it is generously meant."

The baron viewed him with a scrutinizing eye, for an indescribable emotion had agitated his heart when he beheld the dignity with which the youth had treated his offer with indifference; nor did it wholly subside when the humble posture was again resumed.

"Thy name and thy profession?" hastily demanded the baron.

"My name is Edwin, and in obscurity I have passed my early days," replied the youth.

"Edwin the Bold shall be thy future appellation; but thy parents, who are they?" The youth was silent, and the baron continued, "Dost thou hear me, boy?"

"I do, my lord; the fate of my parents is to me unknown. An outcast and a wanderer, Edwin has no home but the tented field, no patrimony but what his sword may glean."

"Thou art heroic, child," said the baron, with a sarcastic smile; but instantly recollecting the manly bravery he had witnessed, he added, "and thou art a hero. Here is the band of De Roos; thou hast won his best regard. Say, wilt thou follow in his train? Nay, look not with such pride, it is above thy station. I meant not as a menial, but to join my chosen band

of fighting men ; they are worthy thy companionship, and thou shalt be my page."

The youth slowly advanced, and bending his knee, raised the extended hand to his lips, exclaiming, " Yes, my lord, I will be your page ; and fidelity shall fill my heart, as, I trust, courage will nerve my arm."

From this moment Edwin became an attendant on the baron, and though too often subject to the impetuosity of his ungovernable pride, yet his conduct fully redeemed the pledge he had given, and there was one whose smile amply repaid for every indignity he endured. The Lady Isabelle beheld him with complacency, and her sweet voice made him forget his sorrows.

The restless mind of the baron kept him constantly in motion, and a jealous watch was set upon his actions ; for, though Henry had outwardly received him into favour, yet his well-known partiality for the house of York rendered him suspected by the court, and especially as secret information had been received, that he was not only friendly to, but had also rendered assistance to the followers of the Pretender Simnel. Edwin followed the baron through many a dangerous expedition ; yet, being often despatched to the castle, he had repeated opportunities of seeing the fair mistress, the remembrance of whom had prompted him on to deeds of valour. His bravery in battle, as well as his humanity in victory, had been oftentimes repeated to the Lady Isabelle, and it was with pleasure that she heard even Henry's self had complimented him upon his gallant conduct and proffered royal service ; nor was she insensible that the youth, though honoured by the sovereign's favour, preferred the baron's suite, that he might enjoy occasional interviews with herself.

Beloved by the peasantry for his generous spirit, respected by his companions in arms, whom he had often led in the path to victory, it could be no wonder, in those chivalrous times, that a sentiment stronger

than mere esteem should be excited in the heart of a young and lonely female, who had, on repeated occasions, heard of, and in some instances witnessed, the exploits of Edwin; for whilst on the field he was bravest amongst the brave, so, at the trials of skill, he stood unrivalled, and many were the prizes he had received from the fair hands of the Lady Isabelle.

Britain could not boast a form or countenance more beautiful, nor a heart more innocent, than she possessed, who prompted him to every virtuous deed, and their love for each other grew with their existence. At first they were unconscious what the feeling meant, for Isabelle had no mother to whom she could impart the sensations which struggled in her bosom, and Edwin, who had been lowly born, dared not to entertain one ambitious thought of aspiring to his master's child. To her it was a sweet endearing theme when musing in lonely contemplation,—a light that beamed upon her soul and mingled with every thought. He nursed his passion, though unknowing what he cherished; for to him it was the adoration of the heart,—the deep reverence which the pilgrim feels when bending at the hallowed shrine of his tutelary divinity.

It would be unnecessary to describe the progress of their love, but with it grew despair at the conviction that the proud and haughty baron would never give his daughter to one of humble origin. Still they loved on, till only one sentiment—one feeling—actuated both hearts; and a secret union was determined on, that they might live and die blessed in each other's strong regard. A priest, to whom Edwin had rendered some especial service, was prevailed on to perform the ceremony at the old chapel in the castle-yard.

The hour arrived which made them one: no parent pronounced a nuptial benediction on their union,—no voice had answered to the blessing of the priest.

The raven, which had built his solitary nest beneath the decayed roof of the chapel, hoarsely croaked at the conclusion of the service; and the only witness to the marriage declared, that when the bridegroom turned to salute his bride, she saw the blood run streaming from his breast.

Within a week from that day, Edwin, at a moment's warning, was commanded by the baron to proceed on a mission to the camp of Henry; but it was secretly surmised, that the message was for the disaffected lords. Neither time nor opportunity were afforded him to bid farewell to the beloved of his heart, and with a sickening pain he departed. The baron alone accompanied him over part of the road, but returned in a few hours, whilst days and weeks passed on, and Edwin came not to his bride.

In the mean time, the rebellion of the earl of Lincoln and Lord Lovel, in support of Simnel, increased, and preparations were made for a general engagement. Rudolph had played a double part, for finding his secret negotiations with the enemy had been discovered, he tried to conciliate the king; but the latter was so enraged at the baron's treason, that, except for some powerful influence near the royal person, he would have been attainted, and paid the forfeit with his life. Rudolph had prepared the castle for a siege; but his cruelties had estranged the hearts of his people from him, so that he felt but little confidence in the defence which they would make. The rebel army was stationed about a mile from Stoke, upon the banks of the Trent, and the royal troops were advancing to give the earl of Lincoln battle.

Among the nobles who accompanied the gallant Henry, was Lord Edmund Mortimer. He had seen the Lady Isabelle, and had offered her his hand; but he was nearly fifty years of age, and knowing him to be depraved in his habits and dissolute in his manners, she had rejected him with dignity and firmness. Still

he persevered, and the better to secure his purposes, he had secretly involved the baron in a labyrinth of difficulties with the court; at the same time he openly restrained his sovereign from executing vengeance, and for this the daughter's hand was to be a pledge for the parent's safety.

But Isabelle was now the bride of another, though no token of his existence had reached her; and sometimes she feared that treachery had deprived her of his love, or death had widowed all her hopes. The baron had used remonstrances and threats to induce the sweet girl's acceptance of Lord Edmund's hand; but if repugnance had marked her former refusal, how much stronger was the feeling grown when she knew that her heart was not at her own disposal, and that her life was indissolubly united to Edwin as her husband. The baron seemed to mourn for Edwin's absence, but not unfrequently threw out mysterious hints that he would never return. Once or twice, in the bitterness of his heart, he had taunted his daughter on her partiality for a menial, and—but that she deemed it impossible—from the language of the baron, she would have entertained a doubt that their secret union had been betrayed.

The castle of Belvoir stood on an eminence, commanding a rich and extensive view of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire. It was erected about the time of the Conquest, and its situation rendered it extremely formidable for defensive operations. At the foot of the hill stood the priory of Belvoir,* dedicated to Saint Mary, for monks of the black order, belonging to Saint Alban's. They were both built by Robert Toden,

* The stables belonging to the present castle are built upon the site of this priory, and it has long been a matter of doubt in which county they stand. Burton, the oldest historian of Leicestershire, claims the priory for that county, but says the castle certainly is in Lincolnshire.

who accompanied William the Bastard into this country, and they descended by marriage to the family of Roos de Hamlake.* Nearly at equal distances from the castle were the forests of Sherwood, Charnwood, and Rockingham, which, after the dispersion of Richard's army, became terrible to the traveller, on account of the numerous bands of robbers that infested them. Many, however, had been induced to accept the pardon of Henry, and were enrolled amongst his troops; whilst others had joined the forces under the earl of Lincoln, and were united to the body of German adventurers under Martin Schwartz, that were waiting at Stoke to give the royal army battle.

Summer reigned in its rich luxuriance, the vale of Belvoir looked beautiful in verdure, and the forest-skirted Trent winding its way, added a delightful coolness to the scene. But there was a wildness in the rank fertility of the soil, for the patient hand of laborious industry had been restrained by the ravages of war, and terror for those daring outlaws who subsisted upon plunder. Indeed, as each party had alternately gained the ascendancy, so had the strong arm of power been stretched forth to exact supplies; and which ever Rose prevailed, the industrious tillers of the earth gained nothing but the goading thorns of arbitrary rule. At a short distance from the castle, near to where a secret subterraneous passage led to its interior apartments, was a space which had been partially cleared from trees, and here had Edwin and Isabelle passed many hours of innocent endearment. The entrance to this passage was so much concealed by nature, as to be known only to a very few, and the baron had caused the way to be blocked up by huge masses of stone, to prevent all ingress, and it was soon forgotten. But Edwin had contrived

* From Roos, or Ros de Hamlake, it passed by marriage to the present family of Manners.

to remove part of the obstruction, and it afforded him many an opportunity of enjoying, unsuspected, the society of her he loved.

Within the space above mentioned, Edwin now stood, dressed in the same garb in which he had left the castle; but his countenance was more pale, and a large loose thread-bare cloak was wrapped round his person, whilst a broad-flapped hat was slouched over his head.

"Oh, what a checkered fate is mine!" he exclaimed. "Where can the innocent find refuge, when murderous guilt stalks forth arrayed in ermine, and the brow that cruelty has stamped her own is glittering with the gilded toy of power? What are my crimes, that here, an outcast and a wanderer, I am doomed to waste my spirit in the sickenings of hope deferred? Who am I? What am I? Some few days back, amidst the windings of the forest, I met a poor bewildered being,—one that I had called by the tender name of mother; but she knew me not. She spoke of Edwin, and shrieking cried, 'My child is nobly born! I am not his parent.' Then, in a lower tone, she feebly uttered, 'Stranger, should you meet my Edwin, tell him his father was—but stop; no, no, the secret still is safe—yet give him this,—and drawing from her withered bosom a naked dagger, she placed it in my hand. 'Tis crusted with Lord William's blood,' said she, 'and Edwin is nobly born.' I would have cherished the poor maniac, for I longed to have the mystery revealed; but her incoherent ravings were too wild to be connected, too horrible to be believed; she escaped from my protection, and I fear the secret has perished with her. Who are my parents, then?" He paused several minutes, absorbed in thought; then suddenly starting, continued, "But hark! I hear voices and footsteps. They advance this way, and danger may be near; yet come what will, I have the same dagger for defence." He drew it from the folds of his vest, and looking

cautiously around, concealed himself behind the huge trunk of a gigantic oak.

Scarcely had he taken his station, when the Lady Isabelle, attended by her own female domestic, entered the area. "Agnes, my girl, thou art kind," said she, "to try and soothe the sorrows of my heart; but your efforts are in vain, for peace, I fear, has fled my breast for ever."

"Nay, lady, say not so," replied Agnes. "Does not nature show us that we should never despair? The genial breezes of spring succeed the hoarse blasts of winter, and the trees which were bare and leafless are clothed again in verdure."

"Agnes, in vain you bid me hope," answered the Lady Isabelle. "Spring can never revisit the dark and dreary mansions of the tomb. Yes, by my mother's side I'll lay me down, and rest in calm security. Here, Agnes, on this spot I have tasted happiness, but it is now dashed for ever from my lips. Months have passed on since Edwin left the castle—left it without one parting word, one token of affection. Could my husband leave me thus, and love me?"

Tears rolled down her pallid cheeks, and a pang of unutterable anguish darted through her bosom, as the doubts of his regard obtruded on her mind. Agnes endeavoured to soothe her mistress, and held out expectations that Edwin would yet return. A gleam of hope beamed on the fair flower, and she exclaimed,— "Oh, hasten on the time, kind Heaven! for in thy sight my vows were pledged before the altar of the Most High! Yet, yet,"—as doubts again stole upon her spirit,— "why has Edwin thus deserted me?"

Never was delight more rapturously experienced than that which Edwin felt whilst listening to the spontaneous effusions of affection; and in a suppressed voice, he said,— "Edwin can never desert the treasure of his soul."

Isabelle did not shriek, she uttered no sound, but

gazed around with trembling fear, mingled with an undefinable pleasure. No human being met her sight, and with quivering lips, whilst feelings of awe crept upon her senses, she exclaimed,—“Speak—speak again, and tell me of my husband.”

Nature was overpowered, as Edwin rushed from his concealment and received her fainting in his arms. “My Isabelle! my love!” exclaimed he, “answer me. Fool that I am; my impetuosity has destroyed her. Isabelle, my love! awake to happiness and Edwin.”

Agnes chafed her temples. Edwin pressed her to his heart—moistened her lips with the chaste kiss of fond affection; and as her eyelids heavily unclosed, she faintly uttered,—“Is it, indeed, my husband? And do you love me still?”

“Bear witness, Heaven,” he replied, “how dearly, tenderly! for you are all that Edwin has on earth.”

“Why, then, so long absent?” she inquired.

“It is a fearful tale, my Isabelle. I have been weighed down to the very precincts of the grave by sickness and oppression.”

“Sickness! Ah, now I see you are pale, my Edwin, and your looks are altered. Oh tell me—tell me all.”

“Seek not to penetrate the mystery, my love; for though my features may have undergone some alteration, my heart remains unchanged.”

“Am I, then, not worthy of my husband’s confidence? Oh, Edwin, think not meanly of me.”

“Nay, nay, my Isabelle, wound not my mind by such expressions; you are worthy of my fullest confidence—yet I would spare you from knowing that which would wring your heart when known.”

“Yet do not keep me in suspense; my heart is already on the rack. Say, why did you leave the castle?”

“It was by the baron’s orders that I went, for duty prompted my obedience.”

"But why have I not heard from you during your absence? You gave no parting word, nor left me one farewell." A burst of agony, proceeding from torturing doubts of his fidelity, shook her fair frame, as she continued,—*"My husband had forgotten me."*

Edwin gazed upon her with a look of impatience, mingled with pity. *"Why this display of anguish, Isabelle?"* he said, in a reproachful tone. She looked beseechingly, and he felt it keenly. *"Well, then, you shall hear."* He went on: *"I had not travelled far on my journey, when the dagger of the assassin was buried in my breast."*

A half-suppressed scream burst forth from the powerless Isabelle, as she wildly gazed upon her husband's face, and clung still closer to his breast. *"Wounded and ill,"* said she, *"and I not with you in the time of your affliction? Who could have aimed the blow?"* Then, recovering a little, she continued,—*"Why did you not send to give us information? My father, Edwin, has sorrowed much for you."*

A look of horror and stifled indignation lighted up his cheek, as he replied, *"Your father? Isabelle; your father?"* Then with a wild hysteric laugh, he added, *"No, not your father!"*

Isabelle looked earnestly at her husband, as if endeavouring to read his thoughts, and after a short pause, she mildly said, *"Edwin, do not speak irreverently of the baron. Remember! he is my parent."*

"Sweet treasure of my soul!" rejoined Edwin, *"this tongue shall never utter, without cause, one word derogatory to your father's honour."*

"But you will return with me to the castle," said she; and then, as if some sudden thought had rushed tumultuously upon her mind, continued, in an undertone, which gradually assumed a loftier pitch, *"Yet, how? Ah no, it must not be! Oh, Edwin! let us fly together to some remote region of the earth, where,*

though in poverty we may hide our heads, our hearts may still be rich in love."

Edwin felt a cold sick shuddering come over his frame; yet mustering his fortitude he replied, with forced calmness, "Nay, nay, my Isabelle, repress these bursts of agitation; what is it you would dread? Yet a prophetic vision opens on my mind, then tell me all my fears can whisper."

"Ah, why did you not send to let me know you were still the same?" inquired she.

"Almost daily, at the risk of life," he dejectedly replied, "have I watched upon this spot, in hopes that kind remembrances might bring you hither,—but you came not."

"Ah, no!" she tremblingly rejoined; "they told me many tales of horror, and spoke of danger and banditti."

Edwin shrunk back; his face, already pale, assumed a deadlier hue as he reiterated, "Banditti! did they dare mention,—but no, they could not tell you that." Then, in more consoling accents, he exclaimed, "Yet, even with a bandit, purity like thine is safe."

She gazed upon him with surprise, watched his changing features, and then inquired, "What mean you, Edwin; why thus disordered? Do you fear those lawless ravagers?"

"Fear! Isabelle, fear!—No, no; 'twas but a passing thought; and now I am prepared to hear the worst."

"Oh, Edwin!" she replied, "my father knows not of our union; and bids me receive another as my bosom's lord. Yet surely, when once acquainted with the sacred tie, he will not reject us, for he loves you, Edwin."

Edwin stood hesitatingly for a few moments, as he looked with pensive melancholy upon his bride, and some secret, which he feared to speak, seemed struggling for utterance; then, slowly baring his breast,

he pointed to a fresh-healed wound, and mournfully exclaimed, "Look here, my Isabelle. It was your father's hand that left this impress here;—yes, it was he who dealt the accursed blow."

Agnes, who had hitherto stood a silent spectator, now rushed forward, and calling to remembrance the vision which appeared when she attended as witness to their marriage, she grasped his vest, and shrieked out with dismay, "See, see,—there's blood upon it still!"

But who can paint the mingling emotions which crowded on the heart of the fair Isabelle. Bewildered with amazement,—unwilling to believe her father could act the murderer's part, she folded her hands upon her bosom, and faintly uttered, "My father deal the blow?—what! murder my husband? No, no, it is impossible; you are mistaken, Edwin."

"Oh, would to Heaven I were!" he replied; "but truth has too deeply stamped its image on my tale. Your father accompanied me through the forest, and, under pretence of communicating some secret mission to the court, drew me aside into a tangled thicket; there he charged me with my love for you, and, like a wily tempter, drew the secret from my heart, called me a base-born menial, and planted his dagger here."

"Hold still my heart, and break not yet!" said Isabelle, as she reclined on Agnes for support; "the brave, the noble baron change his nature to the vile assassin's! I am bewildered, and sick at soul. How then, my Edwin, did you escape?"

"I was discovered by some residents of Sherwood Forest," he replied, after a short pause, "who bore me to a place of safety, healed my wounds, and—and—I am here, my Isabelle."

"My father lift his hand against my husband's life?" exclaimed Isabelle, abstractedly. "Guide me, Almighty Ruler, in the path of duty! Well, indeed,

might you avoid the castle; and, even now, your presence here must be unsafe. Where is your place of residence?"

"Fear not, my Isabelle: supposed to be numbered with the dead, chill superstition will avert the evil. But still there are those I would not wish to meet within the precincts of this spot. Yet, come what may, Edwin will never shrink." At this moment the sound of a bugle was wafted to their ears; and Edwin, starting, cried, "Hark! they come, and we must part, my Isabelle."

"Ah, no!" she replied; "'tis but some distant hunter's horn."

"Yet we must not be seen together. I know them, Isabelle, and our future happiness depends on present secrecy. But, say, dare you meet me this night in the old chapel, near the southern tower?"

"In the chapel? It is in ruins, Edwin; and has been so since the prior banned it with his curse, after the sacred walls had been polluted by human blood. Yet, why should I fear; it is my husband's wish, and with him I live, and with him I die. At ten I will be there."

He clasped her in his arms, pressed his lips to her pale cheek, and thus they clung, in silent anguish, to each other. The horn again sounded, at no great distance from where they stood. He started, exclaiming, "They are close upon us;—hasten, my Isabelle, —hasten through the secret path!"—then, rising majestically, and grasping a stake from the ground, added, "and though they were a host, I will defend the way."

He attended them to the entrance of the subterraneous passage, and then returned to the spot which he had left; but the crashing of the surrounding thickets warned him of approaching danger, and therefore he hastened to the secret way to screen himself from observation. Here a fresh desire

crossed his mind; he wished to ascertain the exact situation in which the Lady Isabelle was placed, as her peril seemed more imminent when he had parted from her than before, and knowing every spot about the castle, he trusted to chance to speed his purpose, and boldly proceeded forward.

CHAPTER II.

"There's blood upon it still!"

It was early morning when the warder at the castle of Belvoir heard the sounds of bugles at a distance announcing the approach of strangers, and shortly afterwards a flourish of trumpets at the great gates proclaimed the arrival of the party that had disturbed the interview of Edwin and Isabelle. It was soon ascertained that a messenger from the royal army requested an audience of the baron, and the massive portals were thrown open for his admission. The retainers of feudal power appeared drawn up in the courtyard, completely caparisoned for attack or defence; and as the herald passed on, leaving his guard at the entrance, he was saluted by the armed men with looks of sullen discontent.

The baron, seated in the hall of state amidst his numerous dependents, waited impatiently the message from the king; nor was his impatience lessened when the herald presented him with a mandate immediately to attend upon his sovereign, and bring his followers to the field.

Rudolph read the summons, and replied that he could not leave the castle in a defenceless state. Outlaws filled the forest, bent on plunder—nay, even the very monks at the priory would seize upon his valuables, should fitting moment serve. With the mandate, however, came a letter from Lord Edmund Mortimer, with information of that which he already knew—his king's displeasure. The baron had played booty on both sides, and neither party loved him. He was well aware that small dependence could be

placed on those whose interests he had himself betrayed, nor could he rely on the rebel band, whose cause he had abandoned when fortune ceased to favour. Private intelligence had been conveyed to him of the impossibility of Lincoln's forces being victorious, for the people disliked the foreign troops, and the imposition of Simnel was everywhere believed. Harassed by corroding passions, vengeful and irritable, the baron's mind could find no settled purpose. Lord Edmund's letter was not calculated to soothe, though it promised life; for at the same time that it painted the frown of a monarch as the herald of death, so did the noble pledge his honour and his oath to save the baron, if the hand of the Lady Isabelle was to seal the bond.

Rudolph, whose remonstrances and entreaties had failed with his daughter, now determined that her acquiescence should no longer be consulted. He knew that Edwin had fallen beneath his hand, and he considered compulsory steps on his part as only a just punishment for Isabelle's delinquency in having married one who was so much beneath her in station. He therefore sent part of his armed men to join the army of Henry, excusing his own attendance under a plea of indisposition, and invited Lord Edmund to an immediate interview, at the same time promising that his requests should be complied with.

The messenger departed, and De Roos returned to his apartment, where, seating himself, he rested his head upon his hand, and seemed overwhelmed with thought. Suddenly he started on his feet, and a fiend-like expression agitated the muscles of his face. "Oh, cursed ambition!" he exclaimed, "it was thy toils that caught my wavering mind, and plunged me deep in guilt. Fiends that haunt my soul, vultures that guaw my vitals, oh, were ye embodied—thus—thus would I crush ye!" He stamped his ponderous feet upon the floor, and clenched his hands and teeth in strong convulsive agony.

Although the sentiments of paternal affection found but little space for nurture in the baron's heart, yet the mortification of yielding to measures of compulsion in bestowing his daughter's hand stung his proud spirit with bitterness. There seemed to be a fitful fever in his brain; for, in the midst of violence and rage, a tremulous agitation, apparently arising from some secret dread, shook his strong frame to all the impotence of childhood. He paced the room with rapid motion, sometimes in sullen silence; then, as corroding thought stirred up reflections on the past, a wild and unnatural laugh, or expressions of defiance, burst from his quivering lips. At length, calmer prospects opened on his view; he became more tranquil, though still his countenance betrayed evident marks of internal agitation.

At this moment the door of the apartment opened, and his faithful follower, Ronald, stood before him. For an instant the baron paused, and fixed his penetrating eye upon the humble friend who shared his bounty and his partial confidence. He gave him a look of suspicious doubt; but his features gradually assuming strong traces of deep, hidden agony, "Ronald," he said, "I wish to have some converse with you. My daughter has refused Lord Edmund's hand, and she is now the only hope that Heaven has left our house; for when my noble brother fell in battle, his heir was with his nurse. Poor child," continued the baron, affecting a look of sorrowing sympathy—"poor child, it caught that fatal distemper the small-pox, and died."

"Pardon me, my lord," rejoined Ronald, with solemnity, "the boy was saved. It was to tell you this I intruded on your privacy."

Language would be inadequate to paint the sudden change in the countenance of the baron. Dismay and horror sat upon his brow, whilst conflicting passions seemed to wither up his faculties. He writhed his fingers in his long black hair, and repeated

to himself, "The boy was saved! the boy was saved!" But, gathering more firmness, he continued, "Saved, did you say?"

"Yes, my lord, and lives."

"It is a base lie, a villanous fabrication! I know he died—that is—yes—yes, I know he died."

"Indeed, indeed, my lord, he lives."

"Dare you thus trespass on my patience to breathe your falsehoods in my ear? Beware, and stir me not to wrath! Is the tale your own, or is it the invention of another?"

"I am not used, my lord, to practise falsehood; my authority is even now within the precincts of the castle—the woman who was his nurse."

"His nurse!" repeated the baron, as he drew his breath, with repeated convulsive catches, almost to strangulation, "His nurse! What does she do here?"

"You shall hear, my lord."

"Be brief, then!" furiously exclaimed the baron; but collecting his scattered thoughts, and assuming a look of more serenity, he continued, "Excuse my impatience, Ronald. Joyous surprise has well-nigh overturned my reason; yet torturing doubt sits heavy on my spirit, and I fear deception."

"Few words will suffice, my lord, to tell the tale. At the first blush of morn, old David and myself were passing round the grounds, when we discovered beneath the cells of the old chapel a human being, whose wasted strength and famished looks bespoke a near approach to death. Prompted by humanity, we bore her to the lodge; and, though age has altered many a feature, yet I easily recognized the daughter of old Margaret. Upon this discovery, I had her conveyed apart from the domestics, for when speech was restored, her ravings were unfit for every ear to listen to."

"Indeed! But thou didst right, my worthy Ronald. And to what did her speech tend?" in-

quired the baron, as he fixed his scrutinizing gaze upon the narrator.

"Alas! my lord," continued Ronald, "her reason was bewildered; she spoke of murder and the Baron Rudolph."

It has been said, the guilty conscience needs not an accuser; for crime, like poison, has its deadly venom, and he who plunges deep in guilt destroys his own happiness and peace. The baron felt this. A storm of recollection passed across his mind, yet, seeing the absolute necessity for dissimulation, he laughed aloud; but his laugh bore no kin to merriment. The very demons bear the terrors of Omnipotence and tremble,—yet do they laugh and horribly exult; and such was the present feeling of De Roos. "She named my name, did she?" said he. "She coupled it with murder, too, and you believe it?"

"Believe what, my lord? Did I not say her reason was bewildered?"

"True! so thou didst; but say, did she indeed name me?"

"She did, my lord; and whilst her hand was searching in her bosom for something which seemed missing, she spoke of your lamented brother, too."

"Of my brother? The plot, then, seems to thicken. But what said she of my brother? She could not speak of him!"

"She did, my lord; for drawing forth her lean and withered fingers, she exclaimed, 'I cannot find it; 'twas Rudolph's present, torn from Lord William's dying heart. Hark!' said she, 'they call—they call!' Then, gazing on her hands, she wildly shrieked, 'These, these are pure; but Rudolph, thine are deeply crimsoned with a brother's blood!'"

The baron's countenance underwent various changes whilst listening to Ronald, and towards the close he seemed to shrink within himself; but it was like the crouching of the tiger about to spring upon his prey.

He drew a dagger from his vest, and rushed upon the defenceless man, and with a voice half-choked by fury, he exclaimed, "Villain, thou liest! I did not murder him, he died upon the field; thou durst not say I murdered him!"

Ronald stood firm, and replied with calmness, "I am no villain, my good lord, but your true and faithful servant, bound to you through every vicissitude of life."

The solemn composure with which this was uttered, recalled the scattered senses of the baron, and, dropping the dagger-point, whilst a smile of scorn mingled with defiance curled his lip, he said, "Ay, I think you have told me that before."

"And have I not proved myself devoted to your interest?"

The grim features of the baron relaxed; he thrust the dagger into its scabbard, and a look of melancholy sat upon his brow. The peril of the moment, operating upon a mind already weakened and distressed, had irritated his spirit and thrown him off his guard. The words of the nurse, though a mystery to Ronald, were not so to the baron; and the unconscious narrator had held up a mirror to the noble's eye, which time could not obscure, though dimmed with blood. He struck his hand upon his breast, and a heavy groan burst forth, as if the tortured spirit was struggling to escape; then grasping the arm of him who but a few minutes before stood beneath the weapon, he mournfully said, "Forgive me, worthy Ronald, my injustice; I have proved and found you ever faithful, and you are now the only being on whom I can depend."

"Yet do not overrate my services, my lord; for your kindness to myself and family demands my gratitude,—my life. Oh, my good lord, can I cease to remember when your hand snatched us from destruction? My aged parents, bowed down with years and with affliction, saw the home of their early

loves enveloped in the crackling flames; and the red hue streaming on the countenance of murdered innocence, seemed to mock the ghastly paleness of their cheeks. My sister, too; she, whose remains now moulder into ashes beneath the turf-raised mound, stood trembling as the infuriated band marked her for their victim; whilst I, bleeding and fettered, could only bite the ground in agony. Yes, the scene is now before me. My venerable father, with his white hair streaming in the breeze, and a look which even demons would have revered. My mother, too,—she, on whose breast I had hung in earliest infancy, felt the rude grasp of villains. Both were bound to trees, as marks for the archer's aim. In vain my sister shrieked,—they revelled in her cries, and mocked her agony. Oh, 'twas a sight of horror! for there they stood, like lambs appointed for the slaughter. But you, my lord, came like a guardian angel to our rescue, the hoary heads of my parents went to the grave in peace, and a sister's purity was saved."

Whilst Roland was speaking, the gloom which had hung upon the baron's brow gradually dispersed, till his eye once more glistened with pride and dignity. The spectacle which had been described to him, called to his memory the time when honour and integrity had swayed his mind, so as for a few moments to make him forget the intervening years—years that were stained with villany and bloodshed. A tear gathered in his eye; but as existing circumstances again rushed like a torrent on his soul, he dashed the unwonted messenger of tenderness away, and his countenance resumed its frowning sternness.

"But this woman, and the boy," he hastily exclaimed; "what more of them?"

"As soon as transient recollection was restored," replied Ronald, "I made myself known, and questioned her; but though the visions of a distempered imagination seemed to be fading away, I could obtain

no other answer than—"The boy still lives—the boy still lives." "

Fevered passion again flushed the baron's cheeks. "Go, Ronald," he exclaimed, "prepare this woman for an interview. I will see her, question her myself; tortures shall wring the secret from her. Go! go!"

Ronald left the apartment, and the baron resumed his hasty walk. "Is the hour of retributive justice then arrived?" said he. "The tempest is gathering o'er my head, yet will I dare the storm, and boldly live or bravely die." He stopped. "To die!—and what, if there should be an hereafter? Pshaw! 'tis but an idle tale, the base invention of some babbling monk. Yet, what is this that struggles in my breast? Down, down, thou hissing serpent, that coils about my heart!" Again he continued his rapid strides; when, unseen by him, a panel at the far side of the apartment unclosed, and Edwin appeared watching his motions. Once more the baron stopped, leaning his hand upon the table, with his back towards Edwin, who silently and cautiously entered the room.

"My daughter!" exclaimed the baron; "she, too, betrayed me, leagued with a base-born wretch, whom my bounty cherished. 'Tis true, he towered above his fellows, was brave and generous; for when, in the heat of battle, I fell o'erpowered by numbers, he rushed between and kept the foe at bay till succour came; and though his flesh was scored with gaping wounds, he saved my life. I loved the boy for this; but his ambitious spirit soared above control: he would have swelled my vassals to rebellion. It is well I crushed the viper: my dagger drank his——"

"Blood!" exclaimed Edwin, placing himself erect, with stiffened limbs and fixed eyes, right in the baron's front.

Rudolph looked upon the figure with desperate energy. "Spectre, forbear!" he cried out, covering

his face with his hands. "Those bones are marrowless! Fiends! fiends! ye have done this!" and he fell prostrate and insensible to the ground.

Edwin gazed upon the fallen noble, and remembered he was the father of his betrothed. He took a dagger from his vest, and laying it upon the table, silently withdrew.

The baron continued insensible upon the floor, when Ronald entered to announce the result of his mission. He immediately ran and raised the head of his prostrate master, shouted loudly for help, and the domestics hastening in, the noble was laid upon the couch. As he slowly recovered, he seemed struggling with fearful agony. Ronald spoke to him, but he heeded not; till at length he suddenly stretched forth his hands with a repulsive motion, exclaiming, "Spectre, approach not!" Then unclosing his heavy eyes, and observing his attendant, he continued, "Ha! Ronald, is it you? I thought——"

"Compose yourself, my lord," said Ronald, soothingly.

"Can the spirits of the dead break through their prison-house, and stand on earth to testify against us?" The eyes of the baron glared wildly around; then pointing to the spot where Edwin had appeared, he went on, "I saw it there!"

"Saw it there!" reiterated Ronald, whilst the terrified servants crowded together. "Saw what, my lord?"

"By Heaven, you echo me! What! would you probe my soul? Beware! beware!" Then, rising up, he added, "Drive these varlets hence; the fit is over."

The domestics immediately withdrew, happy to escape from the dark frowns of the haughty, yet conscience-stricken noble. "Oh, Ronald!" he exclaimed, "how weak, even in his best strength, is man!"

"Pardon me, my lord," replied the humble friend;

"you suffer an overheated imagination to affect your brain, and thus fancy embodies thought."

"Was it so? Did you see nothing—hear nothing? Yes, yes, it must have been imagination; and this heart, that never shrank in battle, now trembles at an air-drawn shadow. Is the woman prepared?"

"She is, my lord; though reason at times is wavering."

"Then lead the way, and see that we have no intrusion."

Ronald once more quitted the apartment, and the baron prepared to follow; but seeing the weapon which Edwin had left behind, he stretched forth his hand, mistaking it for his own, and whilst secreting it in the folds of his robe, said, in a low voice, "My dagger! perhaps I shall have need of thee:" then, in a shrill tone, he continued, "Now, then, ye smiling fiends! oh, steel my heart and nerve my arm, to plan and execute my vengeance."

"Vengeance!" repeated a hollow voice near the panel where Edwin had disappeared. The baron started, and Ronald at that moment entering the room, the former rushed at him, and in a voice of fury, cried out, "Villain! do you mock me?"

"My lord, I spoke not," returned Ronald, "but thought you called me to return."

"Did you not speak?"

"No, my good lord; have you then heard a voice?"

"A voice!" exclaimed the baron, with desperate energy; "ay, a voice sounding from the dead, that called for vengeance. Vengeance!" he wildly cried, then burst into a demoniac laugh as he hastened from the room, "yes, vengeance shall be mine!"

Stretched upon a humble pallet within a low-built room, apparently designed, from its strong formation, as a place of security for the better sort of prisoners, lay the woman over whom the baron designed to exercise control. She was coarsely attired, and her ghastly features seemed to announce that the cold

hand of death pressed heavy on her heart, freezing the current which prolonged existence; yet her restless eye rolled round with a peculiar frenzy, that plainly told there was a method in her very madness; and the wild hysteric laugh, like the last gusts of a subsiding tempest, seemed to announce that the calm of dissolution was rapidly approaching. The only light proceeded from a small grated window in the thick stone wall, and it was just sufficient to give a double horror to the gloominess of the apartment.

Rudolph and his attendant entered at the door, and Ronald informed the wretched female of the baron's presence.

"Raise me up," she wildly cried; and as Ronald complied with her request, placing the pillows behind her for support, she went on, "The baron here,—the good Lord William? No, no!" she added, fixing her eyes upon De Roos,—"*no, no! I know you now. Monster, depart! Where is my husband?—where your brother?—where your sainted wife?*"

"Peace, wretch!" exclaimed the baron, grasping the instrument of destruction beneath his robe; "*peace! I have a dagger here.*"

"Dagger!" she harshly screamed, "*I defy it. Here, strike upon a bosom wild as the lightning-blasted heath, for thy damning wiles have already blighted every hope. Monster, thou art hateful in the eye of Heaven!*"

The baron trembled with ungovernable rage; he lifted the dagger in his hand, and seemed prepared to spring with fury on his defenceless victim, that he might make the blow more sure; but Ronald firmly grasped him back, exclaiming, "*Forbear, my lord! imbrue not your hands in a fellow-creature's blood. Remember what you wish to learn: the stroke of death is even now upon her.*"

"Nay, nay!" responded the female, "*arrest him not. This vault must speak torments to his guilty soul, for here has perished many a victim to his hate.*"

But oh! my boy, my boy still lives!" and she struggled with wild bursts of laughter.

"Blistered be the tongue that utters it!" exclaimed the baron. "A thousand curses on your head! and, but for knowing more, I would cut even the short thread that binds you still to earth."

Again the bewildered woman raved with her wild laugh. "Stop," said she; "baron, I will tell you all, and fix a leech upon your heart that shall suck its venom out."

"Fool!" cried the baron impetuously, "did he not perish by disease?"

"No! he escaped the contagion, and was rescued from the token of affection sent by a fond uncle to hasten his departure; for oh! I snatched him from the very jaws of fell destruction!" and then, with quivering voice, she sang—

"Once he hung upon my breast; yes, he hung upon my breast,
And oft the source of nourishment his little fingers press'd;
But now he grasps the battle-brand, and bears a hero's name,
And many a gallant deed 's enroll'd upon the book of fame."

Again she wildly laughed, and then continued, "Yes, he lives! my Edwin lives!"

"Edwin!" repeated the baron and Ronald at the same moment. But the former went on, "My foreboding soul looks on with horror. Say, what—what became of him?"

The fevered frenzy seemed dying away in the tortured brain of the poor being, as she feebly answered, "I would have brought him up in happy ignorance, knowing the price of blood was on his head, but he disdained the peasant's lot; and though he never knew another parent, yet he left my cot to serve his country."

"Ah! did he so?" eagerly inquired the baron.

"Yes," she continued; "he fought in battle, even at your side, and rescued you from death."

The baron's laugh was scarce less wild than the

expiring female's, and he added, "This is as it should be!"

"You relent, then," said the woman, falteringly. "But he is safe from the castle; and ere he returns, a trusty friend will reveal his title, and warn him of his danger."

"Is it so, fond fool?" rejoined the baron, drawing in his breath, whilst his countenance assumed a look of stern malignity. "Know then, from me, he can never return; his bones lie rotting in the tangled forest, and lack a place of sepulchre; for I—ay, I—buried my dagger in his heart."

The horror-stricken Ronald started back, and gazed upon the demoniac expression of his master's face; whilst the unhappy woman once more burst out, "Oh! blood-hound! monster! finish your cruel purpose, and let my tortured spirit escape your company. Yet stay! the hour of retribution is at hand; the terrors of the Almighty are upon you!—the arm of Omnipotence shall crush you, worm!—and I will witness at his bar against you, before you quit this world. Yes! I will demand justice on a murderer; for blood crieth from the ground."

The baron's mind was passion-tossed; yet there seemed to be some mighty spell upon his limbs, that fixed him to the spot; till all at once he sprang forward, and raising the dagger which Edwin had left upon the table, was about to strike the fatal blow, but Ronald forcibly restrained his arm.

"Hold him not, Ronald," said the female feebly. Then, looking at the weapon that was held above her, she wildly shrieked, "Ha! it is the same, and I had lost it! Where got you that, baron? Look at it, 'tis crusted with a brother's blood."

Rudolph gazed with terror on the instrument, for he knew it well; and then exclaimed, with vainly suppressed agony, "Fiends! torments! it is even so." He turned to Ronald, and more fiercely uttered, "Villain! where did this come from?"

"I know not, my lord," answered the agitated Ronald, as he looked upon the spectacle with horror and amazement.

The baron, with shuddering tremor, as if palsy shook his limbs, fixed his straining sight upon the weapon, and continued, as if addressing it, "I would I could cast thee from me, but thou art grasped with strong convulsive agony: I cannot loose my hold!" Then, raising himself erect, as if to gather resolution, he shouted, "Yet, come every demon from the fathomless abyss of tortured spirits, to appal the sight and mar the sense, Rudolph will still be firm!"

"You know it, then?" said the woman. "It was intended for my Edwin, too; but I stayed my husband's hand, who fled from me for ever. Keep it, baron; keep it in your sight to glut your brutal rage. I go! I go!" she falteringly exclaimed; and then, with convulsive snatches, added, "Pardon—pardon, Heaven!" Again she struggled to rise; and fixing her dim eyes, already glazed with the film of death, upon the baron, uttered the word, "Remember!" fell backward on the pallet, and the fitful fever of life was over.

Rudolph gazed with a sort of idiotic stupor upon the corpse, although his mind was actively engaged, for his thoughts reverted with rapid flight to former seasons, when the hapless creature was a young and joyous wife; and then, with equal rapidity, they anticipated the future, when the summons would inevitably arrive to call him from the scenes of time. A few minutes filled up the lapse of years; for busy memory hastily sketched the shadows that passed in swift review before him. Other reflections obtruded. He had been induced to remove his brother, (who, from his general character and disposition, had received the appellation of the good Lord William), that he might seize upon his title and estates; and the same ambitious design had prompted him to attempt the destruction of his brother's child. Disappointed in

his expectations of a male heir, bitter feelings had crossed his mind at the prospect of Belvoir passing into other hands by the female line, and the name of his family becoming extinct; and now, when he knew that this might have been spared him, by the union of Edwin and Isabelle, but for the deadly purpose he had executed, a thousand conflicting passions harrowed up his soul. His crimes had, indeed, been many, and longer concealment seemed impossible; still his revengeful spirit remained unsubdued. Suddenly he turned his ardent gaze upon the humble attendant, who bent over the lifeless body.

"You know me, now," exclaimed the baron; "therefore, beware. This wretched being has escaped my vengeance; but let her carcass be thrown out in the forest before the sun shall gild the morrow. Nay, Ronald," he continued, observing marks of remonstrance on his countenance, "no hesitation. I leave you to execute my orders, and let your actions testify obedience."

The baron quitted the apartment, and Ronald, shuddering at the scene he had witnessed, stood silently reflecting upon what had passed. Edwin had always been a favourite, and Ronald had more than once entertained ideas that the youth was not descended from a peasant birth. His surmises were now realized, but in a fearful way. Edwin was shown to be the rightful heir of Belvoir's rich domains; yet the usurper had wilfully shed his blood, though unconscious of the consanguinity which ought to have claimed his fostering protection. Edwin had lived as a vassal in the castle of his ancestors, basely deprived of his inheritance; but Ronald knew not that he had wedded his young and lovely relative, although their attachment was not to be concealed from his observant eye. His tears fell unrestrained upon the ghastly face of the dead, as he uttered,—

"Thy career is closed for ever, and thou art now

beyond the reach of malice. What is reserved for me I have yet to learn; but sooner would I suffer a thousand deaths, than wear the coronet of Baron Rudolph, stained as it is with blood." He drew the coverlet over the frail remains, and mournfully withdrew.

The sun had nearly reached his meridian altitude over the forest of Sherwood, and the day was beautifully serene and clear, as two men sat under the shade of the gigantic oaks, at a short distance from the banks of the Trent. Their athletic frames showed that nature had been bountiful in her benison of strength, and there was a hardy daring in their looks that spoke at once the lawless bandit. Their dress was dark-green, with a black belt passing round the waist to suspend the heavy sword; a close skull-cap of iron was laid, with their carbines, on one side, and they stretched their limbs like men who were tired from long watching.

"Well, Vincent," said one of them to his fellow, "fortune has not favoured us much to-day. I begin to weary of this droning life. I feel a sullen indignation at being compelled to rob the defenceless passenger of his little pittance."

"And so do I," replied the other; "but what remains for us in an age like this? We have been bred to the field, Duncan, from our earliest youth; and since we lost that day on which the gallant Richard fell and Richmond triumphed, we have been hunted like beasts of prey. Proscribed and valued, this forest became our portion, and surely, Richard's soldiers have an equal right to levy contributions with Lord Richmond's troops?"

"Still, Vincent, it should be upon the great and powerful, where the arm might win what the breast would wear. They say the earl, who wears the crown as seventh Henry, hath need of troops."

"Why, ay, Lincoln has raised the standard of rebellion; but I know the impostor Simnel well; and

'tis but three days since I traversed through the camp, near Stoke, where all was preparation for a desperate conflict. I do not like these German strangers; and would freely fight for Henry, were the outlawry repealed."

"You cannot mean it, Vincent; it is impossible. Our troop has been the terror to surrounding counties, and mercy is denied. What, then, have we to do, but to join heart and hand in holding to the last? Are you apprehensive of immediate danger?"

"It was not fear that prompted the expression, but dissatisfaction at an idle life; yet let me tell you, brother, our chief's protracted absence has given the lieutenant an opportunity for dividing the opinions of the men, to get himself elected in his stead. For my part, I will not yield to his control."

"Nor I; our captain will return and hurl confusion on such base designs. He has the firm attachment of the troop, and though the youngest man amongst us, yet he is the most powerful and brave."

"I will uphold you in that last, by the dreadful gripe he gave me for letting you mad Moll escape: I feel it in every limb this present hour."

"The secret of his absence is, I believe, unknown."

"It is to me, and perhaps he has been betrayed but hark, some one approaches." The two men grasped their arms and knelt behind the bushes as they watched the coming intruder. A short, thick set being, closely enveloped in a loose cloak, with a harp slung at his back, and a well-filled wallet under his arm, advanced towards the spot, which the moment he had reached, Vincent sprang from his concealment hoarsely exclaiming, "Stand, fellow, or die!"

He was answered by a loud burst of laughter, as the minstrel threw back his cloak and showed the well-known features of a comrade and confederate. "This must be a good disguise, indeed," said he "when you are both deceived."

"Ah, Wilnot, is it you?" said Duncan. "What news abroad?"

"The king has issued a proclamation, offering free pardon to our gang if we will render up our chief. Is he returned?"

"No!" replied Duncan, "and I think the lieutenant's head ill-fitting on his shoulders if he usurps the trust. But what have you done, Wilnot? Your pouch is filled."

"There is but little doing now," he, laughing, answered; "for, what with the king and the rebels, who plunder everybody between them, the life of a bandit will soon be anything but gentlemanly. Yet I met a rosy priest in the forest, with a huge red proboscis, that dangled from a face of scarlet, and seemed like a baron of beef roasting before a good coal-fire. 'Good-morrow, father,' quoth I. 'Good-morrow, son,' said he; 'seekest thou my blessing?'—'Yes, holy father, the blessings of thy well-stored purse, gained by hypocrisy and fraud. Come, come; give it to an honest man, who knows its value, and will, like yourself, spend it freely upon women and in wine.'"

"And what said he to that, Wilnot?"

"'Son, would you rob the church?'—'Ay, father, if it were within the compass of your belt, and there seems plenty of room for steeple and all. Come, come; hand over!'—'Misguided youth,' said he, 'I will excommunicate you.'—'Don't trouble yourself, father; I am excommunicated already.'—'I will denounce eternal misery.'—'As you please, father. Give me the crowns here; you are welcome to those hereafter.'"

"He was a hard bargain, Wilnot," said Vincent.

"But he fetched his price," replied the other.

"'Nay, nay, son,' said he; 'I am but a poor friar, travelling on a sorry beast (lean, like myself, with penance), to the priory of Belvoir, to attend a confessional and fast.'—'I'll help your pious purposes, father; come, hand over, I say.'"

"And what did you get?" inquired Duncan.

"Why, this poor friar, full of fasting and penitence, disgorged fifty hard crowns, a flask of good Nantz, two cold fowls, a knuckle of ham, and a venison pasty; and now, who's for dinner?"

The repast was quickly spread beneath the trees, and the trio sat down to enjoy themselves, with much merriment, at the expense of the worthy friar. The flask went briskly round, when the blast of a horn, sounded in a peculiar manner, stopped their mirth. "That is the call to the cavern," said Wilmot. "There's something in the wind; let us obey the summons. Come, hand round, my brothers, and let us stick to the carcass—(shaking the flask)—as long as the spirit remains."

In a few minutes all traces of their meal were cleared away; they resumed their arms, and slowly quitted the spot.

CHAPTER III.

"So foul a sky clears not without a storm."

King John.

IN one of the most sequestered spots of which the forest of Sherwood could boast, was an extensive subterraneous cavern, so admirably concealed from the prying eye of curiosity, that, except to those who had a previous knowledge of its existence, it would have been almost an impossibility to have discovered its situation. Whether it had been formed by the hand of nature, or excavated by the laborious toil of man, there was no record left to give information; but it was evident that the invention of art had been called in aid, to deceive the eye of any wanderer who might chance to stray in that direction. The ground was almost everywhere level, but covered by the spreading branches of the oaks, the spaces between them being entirely overgrown with thick and tangled shrubbery; and only at one place was there any clearance, which seemed to be caused by some sterile defect in the soil, and here a number of rocky mounds threw themselves up to the height of several feet. There was nothing, however, remarkable, or that could attract attention, in their appearance, although it was evident that the footsteps of man had indented a pathway to them from the general line of road: but, on careful examination, a passage might be discovered between the fissures of the rocks, which, taking several short turnings at right angles with each other, led to an abrupt descent into the bowels of the earth. Ingenuity, however, had been called into action; for, after passing through the first of these passages, an obstruction appeared to further

progress by means of a strong oak door, the outside of which was faced with rough-hewn stone of considerable thickness, so as to make it resemble the rest of the rocky apertures.

The great cavern itself was very capacious. A large lamp hung suspended from the centre, which was kept constantly lighted; but the rays shed a misty dimness upon remote objects, so as to make them appear in the dusky gloom like unshapen masses of hideous distortion. A number of other lamps, however, were fixed to the walls, which, upon particular occasions, when the whole were illuminated, sent forth great brilliancy. Beyond this cavern was a smaller one, which was also lighted up, and a long table stood in the middle, whilst others of less magnitude were ranged along the sides. In each of these caverns there were a great number of recesses containing bedding, of such materials as suited with the humour of the occupant.

This was the abode of the banditti, whose name inspired universal terror. The chief had been absent several days; and the second in command, who was jealous of the captain's power, had taken advantage of the moment, and gained a strong party in his own favour. The call to the cavern had been sounded, and the whole gang assembled in the large apartment, where every lamp emitted its red glare, and seemed to create an artificial day. The band were all habited alike and ready armed, and their reckless looks plainly told their calling. They were now lounging about, as if disquietude had crept amongst them, and each was jealous of his fellow. At length the lieutenant inquired, with visible agitation, "Is the muster-roll called?"

"It is," replied Duncan, "and every man is present."

A pause ensued; during which the lieutenant paced the cavern hastily, and, then stopping, he exclaimed, "Comrades, the lazy life we live but poorly

suits with the bold daring that has graced our actions heretofore; and now our captain's absence prevents our excursions, save in a petty way."

A murmuring arose amongst the men, and one of them rejoined, "He promised to return, and lead us on to deeds full worthy of the swords we bear. The allotted time has passed these two days, but he is absent still."

"What is there in one man?" exclaimed a bandit, whose ferocious countenance bespoke the murderous nature of his heart—"what is there in one man, that we should creep from bush to bush, and drag our listless footsteps through the forest, as if afraid to meet a foe? I am for striking a bold stroke at once. Let us choose a leader—one who knows our mettle,—storm some fair castle, and revel in its rich profusion. What say you, mates?"

Murmurs again rose higher than before, till a voice was heard that stilled them for a moment. "It was our captain's orders," said the man, "that no one should quit the forest till his return."

"Why comes he not, then?" answered the fierce bandit, in a tone of savage wildness. "Are we to spend our time in paltry speculations? Let us to Belvoir Castle, and make its master tremble."

"Ay, you'll find prog enough there, my boys," said Wilmot, "Why, we might get sufficient wealth to make us all gentlemen, purchase commissions in the army, and leave off robbing the lieges to plunder the king."

The stillness of irresolution followed, and endured for several minutes, till the lieutenant once more addressed them. "Comrades, you are silent. Why should a youth thus cling about your rugged hearts? For shame! 'Tis womanly,—a weakness unworthy of your natures."

"I am for a new captain," vociferated another bandit. "Our last had too much humanity in his heart for me; and though the foremost in the conflict,

yet always spared the lives we conquered, and this will some day betray us to our foes, in spite of his precautions."

"I am for a new leader," shouted the lieutenant; "one whose years and undaunted courage will do justice to your choice. It is a post of arduous enterprise, requiring consummate skill, an eye that never sleeps, a hand that is always armed, and an ear that is ever on the watch."

"Where will you find a better," inquired Duncan, "than the one we have already? I know your designs, lieutenant, but never will accede to them."

"Let us throw off disguise at once, men," exclaimed one of the party; "and in spite of murmurings or threats, here now invest our worthy lieutenant with a chieftain's power. How, shall we put it to the ballot?"

"No!" fiercely replied Duncan; "we'll poll for it with our swords! Our captain's cause is mine, and I will maintain it to the death."

Dark, angry looks and fiery flashing of the eyes now passed amongst the men; and it was evident, by the separating of the band into different parties, that a storm of outrageous passions was ready to burst forth into desperate conflict. At length several voices cried out, "A new captain! a new captain!"

"Whom do you choose?" inquired the bandit who had first spoken.

"The lieutenant!—the lieutenant!" shouted the men with loud cheers.

"Then, comrades," said Duncan, as soon as silence was restored, "we must try the temper of our steel; and, good lieutenant, you shall be my lot."

"In an instant, Duncan, Wilmot, and Vincent were firmly placed side by side, their heavy swords poised in their strong hands; whilst the band, with desperate impulse, ranged with their leaders, and took up their positions for the fight. They gazed on each other in stern silence; and, as old remembrances of brother-

hood crept upon their minds, there was hesitation in their manner, till the lieutenant sprung forward, exclaiming, "On! on!"

"Stop!" cried Duncan, holding his party back. "Yet hear me one word."

"Hear him not," said the lieutenant, "but smite the traitor down."

"No, no!" was answered by all the band, who felt unwilling to close their lawless amity in strife; "let us hear what he has to say."

"Comrades!" said Duncan, "for nearly two years this spot has been our sole possession. Here we have lived like brothers, and, should we now divide, the weakened band must soon dissolve, and fatal consequences ensue. But arm to arm, and sword to sword, let me and your elected leader try the issue, and do you abide the conqueror."

"'Tis nobly offered," exclaimed the men. "What say *you*, lieutenant?"

"Think you I will shrink?" answered the lieutenant. "No, that traitorous dog shall bite the dust; his flesh shall feast the eagle!"

"Spare your breath, good sir," said Wilmot, "you will need it in the contest. And, brothers, stand back," he continued; "give them room to play the man."

Then followed a scene such as Salvator Rosa loved to trace. The dark and frowning band, with firm determination, drew back at Wilmot's bidding, and seemed to contemplate the approaching contest with that stern delight which warriors feel, when the brave meets the brave in the death-struggle for victory. The foemen cautiously approached each other; and seldom were there seen two powerful frames so equally matched. With eye, and foot, and point opposed, they stood watching for advantage; but, at this moment, a tall, majestic figure rushed into the cavern, seized Duncan by the shoulder, and swinging him behind, placed himself in front, exclaiming, "The quarrel's mine! Now, villain, look to your life!"

A simultaneous shout burst from the whole band, as they looked upon the intruder; and several voices exclaimed, "It is our captain! it is our captain! We will have no other leader!"

Gigantic in stature, and with limbs admirably proportioned, the chieftain threw himself into attitude, and looked like a second Hercules before the Numidian lion. His head was covered with a polished steel helmet, surmounted by immense black plumes, that flowed gracefully around it. Light body armour, of great brightness, covered his breast, and his dress was arranged in the most perfect order. A black mask of silk concealed every feature of his face; but his fine large eye, as it was fixed upon his adversary, indicated a soul of undaunted courage.

The shout was again repeated; and "We will have no other leader!" once more sounded through the cavern.

"Base dogs!" exclaimed the lieutenant; "then singly I must bear the brunt." He made a desperate rush at the chief, but the next moment fell bleeding at his feet.

The captain leaned upon his heavy sword, and calmly said, whilst beckoning to two of the gang, "Convey this fellow to his bed, and see that his wound is dressed." Then turning to the band, who cowered before his look, in a strong, clear voice, he uttered, "How? what is this that you would do? Are ye, then, tired of my control?" He threw his sword to the opposite side of the cavern, and, as it fell with a ringing noise that echoed round the walls, his laugh of scorn mingled with the sound. "See," he continued, "I am in your power; singly—unarmed—I dare ye all! Seize on this body, and purchase your pardon with my blood. The forces of the king are on the borders of the forest;—why stand ye looking thus upon me? Slaves! dastards! where are your boastings

now? Wild and untameable as the mountain torrent,—fickle as the changing wind,—unstable as the foam upon the ocean,—what is it that you would require?”

The gang gazed irresolutely at one another, till one voice was heard exclaiming, “Pardon!” and the whole immediately burst forth, uttering the same. Duncan presented the chieftain with his weapon.

“Pardon?” exclaimed the leader, proudly grasping the sword. “Rebels, it is granted. Have I not promised to lead you on to deeds of glory? The time is now arrived, and which arm will shrink when mine shall lead the way?”

“Lead on! lead on!” shouted the banditti, “be it for living conquest, or for noble death!”

The chief, with calm dignity, stood boldly erect, and commanded the scouts to report their proceedings. Several men advanced, relating what they had learned of expected booty. “Now, Duncan, my faithful friend,” inquired the captain, “inform me of your duty.”

“I have done nothing, captain,” answered Duncan. “A poor pilgrim, fainting with fatigue, worn and hungry, craved my pity. I obeyed its dictates, fed him, chafed his weary limbs, and he is now reposing on my bed.”

A murmur of dissatisfaction arose among the band, lest the secret of their retreat should be discovered; but it was checked by the voice of the chief, as he said, “Thou hast done right, my worthy Duncan; the helpless are never injured by the brave. Wilmot, what intelligence do you bring from Belvoir?”

“All there is gaiety and preparation for the nuptial festival,” replied the man. “Well disguised as an aged minstrel, even my oldest friends knew me not. I quitted the castle but some two hours since; the rooks from the priory were already

mustered for the marriage ceremony, and the Lady Isabelle is this night to be married to Lord Edmund Mortimer, who was hourly expected. All the world seems in requisition to partake of the general merriment; the tenantry were crowding in, and I hope, captain, we ourselves may be present to join in the good cheer: there are some pretty pickings."

"Is the Lady Isabelle willing, did you hear?" inquired the chief.

"Why, as for the matter of that, captain," answered Wilmot, "great folks seldom take it into consideration. No, no, the Lady Isabelle refuses; but force is to be used, and the ceremony once over, 'tis no use turning rebel then."

The chief stood musing for several minutes, and then said, in an under-tone, "Yes, yes, we will be there."

"Bravely said, captain," returned Wilmot. "I know, from old experience, that there is fine prog at the castle."

"Why, ay," rejoined the chief; "do your thoughts tend that way?" Then raising his voice to a lofty pitch, "Comrades," said he, "remember your oath. When I first received from you the authority of a leader, it was taken but upon one condition. The period is arrived,—Belvoir Castle is our own, but the property must be respected. Nay, murmur not; for though we bid defiance to the laws of God and man, let us be true and firm to one another. Make no reply. Go, Duncan, lead the pilgrim hither."

Duncan obeyed, and soon afterwards returned, leading in a venerable man, clothed in toil-and-time-worn garments, that were soiled and torn. A bandage was placed over his eyes, which, on a signal from the captain, was removed the moment the pilgrim had gained the centre of the cavern. A solemn stillness pervaded the whole band as they gazed on the aged

man, who looked with astonishment, though undaunted, at the scene around him.

"Ha! where am I?" he exclaimed, "and what are ye?"

"Men, father, men, though vulgarly called robbers," replied a bandit.

"A lawless troop of ravagers! murderous banditti!" continued the pilgrim.

"At least," said Duncan, "you might be civil; your life has been spared."

"And for what purpose?" replied the venerable man; "to remain your prisoner, or to suffer tortures? To hear the shrieks of the wounded and the groans of the dying echoing in my ears?—for, like the wolf, 'tis blood must satiate your rage."

The band scowled fearfully on the pilgrim, and their threats were muttered in distinct terms, till the voice of the captain commanded silence, which was as promptly obeyed.

"You are their leader, then," said the aged wanderer. "Methinks a form like thine might have contained a noble soul."

"Come, come, Mr. Palmer," expostulated Wilmot, "not a word against the captain, if you please."

"The pilgrim, with stern calmness, continued, "The attachment of these men, too plainly speaks the depravity and murderous nature of their chief."

The robbers had borne his taunts with tacit submission to control; but now, one of them, wishing to ingratiate himself with his leader, rushed forward, raised his dagger as if about to strike, and in a menacing manner exclaimed, "Peace! hoary wretch, or this dagger——"

"Blood-thirsty dog, forbear!" vociferated the captain, flinging the robber from him with as much ease as if his hand had grasped an infant. Then, turning to the aged man, he said, "Pilgrim, here you have found protection, you have shared our food, and this worthy fellow ventured his life that yours might

be preserved. You call us bandits, and so we are. What is the world but a robber's den? What are mankind but plunderers? Do not they prey upon each other? What is the monopolizer of a people's bread, who riots in their groans and feasts upon their tears? What is the magistrate who takes a bribe to turn the course of justice? What is he who listens to the cries of widows and of orphans, and steels his heart against their prayer? What the wily statesman who robs a nation of its wealth to gratify a sovereign's lust?"

A murmur of applause resounded through the cavern as soon as the chief had ceased speaking, but the pilgrim remained unmoved. "I little thought to hear so faint an attempt to vindicate the cause of outraged justice," he replied. "You seem not to have numbered many years. Your features are concealed, but oh! if candour has fixed her seal upon them, and the least particle of virtue still remains within your breast, oh! let me warn you, fly this company,—call it what you please—and in penitence and prayer appease the anger of your Maker." He pressed his hands together, and as he raised his head, the dark hood of his garment fell backwards, and left his countenance exposed to the general gaze.

At this moment Wilmot rushed forward, and earnestly looking on his face, exclaimed, "Art thou really flesh and blood? or art thou a spirit sent to make the brave man tremble and harrow up his soul?"

"A pilgrim, I—a stranger to my father's house, one whom the oppressor's hand has crushed,—chains and a dungeon have been my bitter portion; for years these limbs have borne the galling fetter in a foreign land." Then, turning and fixing his eyes upon Wilmot, he continued, "Robber, you know me not!"

"Hast thou, then, forgotten the field at Towkesbury?" rejoined Wilmot.

The pilgrim started, and fixed his deep gaze upon the bandit. At length he uttered, "I have not forgotten, and, villain! thou art the man. I know you now; be secret, and I forgive."

"Why should I be secret?" answered Wilmot. "Captain, I was employed, in the way of my profession, to perpetrate a double murder. I thought my purpose executed, but now I find the blow was weak: this was one victim."

"And who employed you on this deed of blood?" inquired the captain.

"The Baron Rudolph," replied Wilmot.

"The Baron Rudolph!" continued the chief. "Pilgrim, who is the bandit now? Prepare, prepare, my men! this night I lead you on to victory." He motioned with his hand, and the gang hastily withdrew. Then, turning to Wilmot, he exclaimed, "I command you to unfold your meaning of a double murder."

"Captain," replied the man, "in early life I was in the service of Lord Rudolph. I was then honest and industrious; but by degrees he tampered with my passions, urged me from deed to deed, nor ceased till these hands were deeply stained in human gore. He sought his brother's life, and not content with this, he sacrificed his boy."

Deep agitation shook the pilgrim's limbs, as he convulsively uttered,—*"Ha! the infant, too! I thought it perished by disease."*

"'Tis false," resumed the other; "I married the nurse, and by bribes and threats was compelled to attempt its life; but my wife saved the child, and gave out that it was dead."

"What became of it?—speak!" hastily demanded the captain.

"I bound her by oath," continued Wilmot, "not to reveal his birth, and never saw her more. But I have heard, when yet a youth, he joined the forces of the king at Bosworth-field, where he first became

acquainted with the present Baron of Belvoir, under whose banner he has since remained, known by the name of 'Edwin the Brave.' "

"Is he, then, within the tiger's grasp?" mournfully spoke the pilgrim to himself, whilst violent emotion shook his frame; and then, raising his hands in prayer, he added,—“Father of mercies, to thy throne will I look up; oh, guard and save my boy!”

The captain turned his ardent gaze upon the venerable man, and hastily exclaimed, — “Your boy? Then, pilgrim, who art thou?”

“It is the good Lord William, uttered Wilmot, “the elder brother of Baron Radolph!”

The pilgrim bowed his head in token of acquiescence, whilst the captain continued,—“My lord, I cannot address you now; a storm of conflicting passions is raging in my breast.” He paced the cavern with hasty strides; then suddenly stopping, — “Wilmot,” he said, “to your charge I commit the honoured stranger, and see that he is treated with all due respect; but let the seal of secrecy be on your lips. My lord, you must retire; haste, haste, Wilmot, and depart.” In a few minutes he was left alone in the cavern, from whence he shortly afterwards issued, to give orders for the approaching enterprise.

At a short distance from the main body of Belvoir Castle, but still within the outer walls, stood a chapel, that had formerly served as a mausoleum for the remains of the dead. It was screened from observation by shrubbery and trees; but human blood had stained the peaceful sanctuary, and the priests had long refused to perform the holy rites upon the altar which had suffered such pollution. The roof was falling to decay, and many a fissure gave admission to the heavy rains, that fell on the monumental figures of those whose remains below were crumbled into dust. Superstition asserted that the spirit of the murdered man (a domestic, who had been killed by an ancestor of the baron's, in a fit of mad impetuosity)

still wandered round the spot, and might frequently be heard amidst the wild gushes of the tempest, adding his shrieks to the harsh howling of the gale. The place was therefore carefully avoided, after nightfall, by all the residents of the castle.

The majesty of day had been two hours below the western horizon, and the heavens glistened with its glorious host, when Edwin cautiously entered the door of the chapel, and placed himself near a massive tomb that stood by the entrance. The noise of mirth and the shouts of revelry came wafted on the breeze, and a bitter expression of impatience passed over his manly countenance. At length the sound of footsteps was heard, and he exclaimed,—

"She comes! she comes! and we will part no more! Yet surely we are discovered. Yon blaze of light, and the long, measured tread that echoes round the walls—ha! now I see that they are men, bearing the last remains of frail mortality. What can this mean?"

Edwin concealed himself behind the tomb, as Ronald, bearing a lamp in his hand, and four men, carrying a funeral bier, entered the opened door.

"Set down your burthen there," said Ronald, pointing to the space before the altar, "for it was there the unhappy creature first plighted troth."

"Holy Francis protect us!" exclaimed one of the domestics, after placing the bier as directed. "How frightful these old gentlemen in stone look, staring full upon us."

"I would not undertake such a journey alone," said another, "to be made a Pope. Come, Mr. Ronald, I suppose you will go now."

"The dead scare not me," answered Ronald. "Look on yon lifeless lump of clay, and tell me what there is to fear?"

"But Father Lawrence says," continued the second speaker, whilst Edwin, unobserved, stole round the tomb and quitted the chapel, "that dead men

play strange freaks at times. Hark! I heard something."

"'Twas the throbbing of your own corrupt heart," replied Ronald.

"Spirits never make a noise," observed a third. "They spring up right before you in an instant, and run their noses in your face—so cold, so chill. Oh dear!" continued the man, shuddering, "I wish I was away from this."

"At any other time these paltry fears would yield amusement," said Ronald, mournfully; "but listen to this truth:—the spirits of the just are far too blessed to quit their thrones of glory to terrify their former brethren of the dust; and those whose sentence of eternal misery has been sealed, think you the being whom they served when living here on earth—think you that he would countenance their wandering here?"

"But he may come himself," exclaimed the first speaker.

"Yes!" returned Ronald; "but he comes not in a form terrific, to scare men's minds and drive them from the evil it is his policy to urge. He spreads his raven wings above the embattled field, and rides upon the conqueror's car; he sits upon a kingly throne, and smiles with approbation on his willing slaves; he lurks in ambush in a woman's eye, and, like the snake, with fascinating look decoys the trembling victim, and instils the deadly venom in the heart."

"Oh dear!" said the third speaker, "I'm sure that's true enough, and makes me think of Agnes. She's got such an eye, I think the deuce is in it, for it makes me ready to fall down whenever she looks at me."

"Well, well, leave me," continued Ronald, "and enter on the scenes of mirth; be it my task awhile to sorrow o'er the dead."

The domestics remonstrated; but finding him determined, they crowded together and quitted the

place. Ronald bent himself in humble adoration before the altar, and remained several minutes in silent prayer. He then rose, and turning to the bier,—

"Poor Lucy," said he, "thou hast dearly paid for thy blind obedience; but, oh! may the eye of Him who witnessed thy penitence forgive thy early errors, for thou wert faithful 'midst the faithless." He started, as a peculiar sound echoed near the building. "'Twas but the passing wind, which whistles through the time-worn casement," he continued; "for who would visit scenes like these, and, at the dark and gloomy hour of night, stand 'twixt the living and the dead?" Once more he started, for the whistle was now louder than before. "Some one is near," said he. "Danger may threaten; and though the dead have no influence to terrify, the living have power to injure. Ha! who are these?"

Two men, closely muffled up in dark cloaks, with their naked weapons in their hands, approached the altar.

"Stand!" exclaimed one of them, pointing his sword at Ronald's heart. "You must away with us."

"Never!" returned Ronald. "By what right do you thus invade the castle?"

"By the best of all rights," replied the other; "an armed force."

"Yet tell me," inquired Ronald, with intense anxiety, are you from the royal army?"

"We are at no great distance from the royal army," said the man.

"I will not stir," exclaimed Ronald, and in an instant he was seized by the two men; but in the struggle, the broad-flapped hat of one of them fell off, and discovered the features of Wilmot, at the same time that the cloak flew open, and showed the costume of the robber band. Ronald started. "Ha!" he exclaimed, "can this be a deception,—is Wilmot

here?—a bandit, too? Look there, unhappy man; look at yon corpse; 'tis as we all must be!”

“No matter,” returned the bandit; “I have seen too many dead men to fear them now.”

“Yet look one moment on that face,” urged Ronald, “and tell me if you know it?”

“Why, old comrade,” said the robber, “if it will please you, I’ll take a peep for old acquaintance-sake.” He took the lamp, and, uncovering the livid face of the corpse, gave it a casual glance. “Well, now I have examined it, I know her not, for it seems to be a woman.”

Ronald took the lamp in his own hand, and held it in such a position that the light fell more strongly on the face of the dead. “Look once again,” he said.

Wilmot complied, and a violent agitation shook his frame as he gazed with intensity upon the corpse. “Why, ay,” said he, “the features are familiar, but——”

“Do you remember this scar upon the cheek?” inquired Ronald, in a tone of deep solemnity.

The bandit trembled in every limb, a misty darkness crept before his eyes; the suddenness of the spectacle had bowed his hardened spirit. The lapse of years rushed upon his mind, and he exclaimed, “Great God, it is she! it is my wife!” and fell prostrate on the bier. At this moment another bandit entered, and Ronald was taken away, carefully guarded.

A very few minutes had elapsed before a light female form entered the chapel-door, and, with cautious apprehension, looked timidly around. “Merciful father!” she exclaimed, “what a night is this; how I tremble.” She advanced towards the bier. “The saints protect me, 'tis a corpse,—a man, too, by its side!”

The female uttered a faint shriek, and supported herself by the altar, when Edwin again appeared, and, approaching the spot, exclaimed, “Agnes! why thus

alone? Where is your lady? why is she not with you?"

"Oh, Mr. Edwin, I am so terrified," replied the weeping girl. "My lady is too closely watched to venture here. Lord Mortimer has arrived, and when the castle bell shall toll again, her fate will then be sealed."

"It is already sealed," returned Edwin with animation. "Go, tell her that her husband is at hand to claim his bride, and hurl confusion on his foes. My faithful Agnes, remember the moment, and be firm."

"I will be firm," replied the trembling girl; "but my lady will scarcely credit what I say. Have you no token?"

"Yes, give her this," said Edwin, drawing a ring from his finger. "Bid her not fear. Haste, haste, good Agnes; I will go with you through the outer court. Oh, do not lose one moment. Whisper to your mistress words of cheer, and tell her Edwin will protect his right."

They quitted the chapel together, and shortly afterwards the sacred edifice was filled by the robber-band, whose dark figures looked fearfully appalling as they moved in the dim light emitted by the lamp. In the midst stood the bandit chief,—his black plumes hanging round his head, and the black mask still concealing his features. By his side stood the pilgrim, and near the door was Ronald, strictly guarded by an armed man.

"Bear forth that fellow to the cold night air," exclaimed the chief, pointing to Wilmot; "it will revive him." Then turning to the pilgrim, he continued, "My lord, it grieves me that so poor a greeting welcomes you to the baronial castle of your fathers; yet, trust me, the bandit will be just."

"I am in your hands, young chief," replied the pilgrim. "Your bearing has been noble, your language far above your seeming, and the treatment of your prisoners dictated by humanity."

"Look at you corpse," resumed the chief, regard-

less of the palmer's praise; "it is the remains of her who nursed thy offspring, Edwin."

"Where, where?" eagerly inquired the pilgrim.

"On this bier, my lord," replied the chief. "We have not time to hold a longer converse now. Honour calls, and we must obey its impulse. Drive mercy from your heart."

"Leave vengeance to whom vengeance belongeth, —the God of retribution," meekly returned the pilgrim as he gazed upon the corpse.

"Are you all prepared?" inquired the captain with impetuosity. A low, simultaneous response in the affirmative was uttered. "Then light every other man his lamp, conceal its gleam beneath your cloaks, and follow me in silence." The order was promptly obeyed, and in a few minutes the chapel was left in the solitary stillness of death.

Lord Edmund Mortimer had arrived at the castle during the evening; and the baron, after vainly employing entreaties, remonstrances, and threats with his daughter, determined that force should be used. To prevent the visitors from ascertaining this fact, he resolved that the marriage should be private, and he himself would remain with the guests till the ceremony was over. The banquet-room was splendidly illuminated; tables, groaning beneath the substantial fare, ran down the centre; and sideboards of massive plate were placed at intervals against the walls, for the use of the servitors. At the upper extremity of the room was a platform, on which a table, raised above the rest, was spread for the bridal party: and here stood the Baron Rudolph, with flushed cheek and restless eye, gazing upon the scene. The minstrels were stationed in a temporary gallery, and occasionally poured forth those lays of war and love for which the old bards were famed. The guests were all arranged, and the festival commenced. Yet there was a sluggish dulness in their merriment, and doubt and apprehension sat on the countenance of all.

The baron could not fail to observe this, and rising erect, he exclaimed, "Now, my good friends, do justice to the cheer. The walls of Belvoir Castle full oft have echoed to the voice of mirth, and, surely, when its last remaining scion is grafted on a noble stock, ye will not refuse my pledge."

"Where is the Lady Isabelle?" inquired a voice from among the guests. "Will she not grace the festive board?"

"The Lady Isabelle is coy and diffident," replied the baron. "She shrinks from the ardent gaze, as the snow-drop melts before the sun. Yet will she not refuse to grace the festival. Come, I will warm your hearts with noble names. I will give you our ancestors, De Roos of Hamelake."

The baron raised the golden cup, and quaffed the generous wine; then shouted, as he held the inverted vessel above his head to show that he had emptied its contents; but no shout answered responsive to his own, the toast was drunk with solemn silence, and a deeper gloom seemed gathering on the guests.

"Worthy friends," exclaimed the baron, "why this startling silence? Let music stir your sluggish spirits. I see a stranger seated among our harpers; sweep then the strings, and fill us with your notes of joy."

The minstrel complied; and after running over the chords with a masterly hand, he improvisatore, in a strong clear voice, the following song:—

"The vulture, the vulture, is proud in his might,
There is blood in his eye, there is death in his flight;
But the soft, gentle dove is both timid and weak,
And her gore deeply crimson the vulture's strong beak.

"The eagle, the eagle, he sits on his throne,
He hears the loud scream, and he hears the death-groan;
Then his wings are outspread, swift as lightning he flies,—
The murderer is struck—see he flutters and dies.

"Proud baron! proud baron! I'd have you beware,
Stay the hand of oppression, the innocent spare,
Lest thine should the fate of the vulture resemble,
For the eagle is near, and, proud baron, tremble."

During this performance the most intense attention was devoted to the musician, but at its close the guests arose in confusion. The language was too pointed to be mistaken, and the storm seemed to burst with more force, from the calm which had preceded it. The baron still stood upon the platform, deeply agitated by conflicting passions; but aroused by the increasing uproar, as the minstrel ceased, he loudly vociferated, "How! what is this? Seize on that villain, and bear him forth to tortures. Good friends, sweet friends, fill high the goblets with the generous wine, and palsied be the hand that will not grasp his cup. I'll give you the bride, the Lady Isabelle!"

At this moment a tremendous shout was heard in the ante-room, and, as if by magic, the tall majestic leader of the robber band, his black plumage waving above his head, and the black mask upon his face, stood on the platform, holding in his gigantic embrace the inanimate form of the Lady Isabelle. He grasped a cup, and raising it on high, he loudly exclaimed, "The bride, the Lady Isabelle!"

The noise at the lower extremity of the room was instantly hushed; the guests huddled together as they gazed at the terrific being, and a low whispering was heard, "It is the bandit chief—it is the bandit chief."

The leader emptied the cup, whilst the terror-stricken noble looked on in stupified amazement. "Proud, haughty baron," said the chief; "you would not, then, invite your neighbours to the festival. The castle clock has struck the hour, Lord Edmund is secured, and the Lady Isabelle is now **THE BANDIT'S BRIDE.**"

This insult awoke the baron from his lethargy. "Villain that thou art!" he furiously exclaimed.

"Where are my vassals? Cowards, can you thus shrink from one man's arm?" He advanced towards the chief, and added, "Resign my daughter!" but in an instant one of the robber band rushed forward between them, and pointed his sword at the noble's breast.

"You see I am not alone, proud man," said the chief; and then addressing the guests, who were stealing away, he uttered, "Friends, remain where you are; my troop is in the outer chamber, and every avenue is secured." He put a small whistle to his lips, and another loud shout echoed through the castle. The Lady Isabelle was partially aroused by it; she raised her head, and glaring wildly around, looked up at the awful being who supported her, and again sank lifeless in his arms.

"Come hither, pilgrim," said the chief, and the aged palmer stood by his side, his head covered over with his cowl, so as to conceal his features. "Now, proud baron," continued the bandit, "and ye, his guests, 'tis time you know the visitors who come to grace the nuptials. The captain of this robber band, and husband of this lady, I will be the master of your revels." He raised his hand, and the whole gang gave a tremendous shout.

Again the Lady Isabelle revived, and, raising her head as she struggled to get free, shrieked out, "Oh! horror, horror! Am I indeed the bandit's wife?"

"Yes, Lady Isabelle," continued the leader, "you are the wife of the bandit chief." He raised his hand to his head, and in an instant the helmet and mask were dashed to the ground, as he added,—"The wife of EDWIN THE BRAVE!"

The baron recoiled as if an adder had stung his vitals, when he beheld the open manly countenance of the man, whom he thought was already numbered with the dead by his own hand. A gleam of joyous delight, mingled with anxiety, spread over the pilgrim's face. The frightened guests felt re-assured at seeing their favourite once more restored, and for

the moment forgot the desperate station which he held. The band were struck with surprise, and remained silent, whilst the Lady Isabelle pressed closer to her husband, unmindful of any other character he bore.

"Now then, proud baron, know me," continued Edwin; "and here is another victim to your sanguinary hate." The pilgrim threw back his hood, displaying the well-remembered features of the good Lord William. "See, uncle, look here; behold your brother, come to claim his title and estates."

Rudolph turned his eager gaze upon Lord William's face, and despondingly said, "Then I am caught, indeed!" But a momentary confidence returning, he scornfully demanded, "'Tis a base invention. Where, where are your proofs?"

"Behold one here!" exclaimed Wilmot. "Baron, you'll not forget an old acquaintance."

The wretched man seemed writhing with torture. "Wilmot, too!" he cried, and added, "all is indeed lost to me," and fell prostrate on the platform.

Edwin directed the attendants to convey the inanimate Rudolph to his chamber, and then, turning to the pilgrim, he bent his knee and implored a parent's blessing.

"My son! my child!" said Lord William, his countenance beaming with affection, and spreading his hands upon the young man's head; but his eyes were rivetted on the black plumes of the helmet that lay upon the floor, and suddenly retreating, he uttered with repugnance, "what! my blessing on a bandit? No, no, it would be too horrible."

"Hear me, my father," Edwin mournfully requested. "When the base murderer's hand was reeking in my gore, he dragged me to a thicket and left me there for dead. These robbers found me, preserved my life, healed my wounds, and chose me for their leader. The Lady Isabelle was mine by previous marriage, and how could I protect her but in my present state?"

"And is this noble stranger the good Lord William? Is he your father, Edwin?" inquired Isabelle. "Are you indeed a bandit? and I—yes, Edwin, I am still your wife."

"Brave girl! heroic virtue!" said the pilgrim; "the daughter's innocence may yet redeem the father's guilt; and for you, Edwin, I will kneel at the throne of sovereignty—my services must be remembered. I will plead with Henry, and may Heaven in mercy aid my suit."

"Father, your prayer is heard," said Edwin: "your son is safe. But hold!" He turned to the robber band. "Comrades, shall we part?"

"Never!" responded the gang.

"Will you still follow me as your captain?" he undauntingly inquired.

"To death or glory!" was the reply.

Isabelle looked imploringly in her husband's face, and her cheeks were blanched with fear, as she tremblingly grasped his arm and uttered, "You cannot surely mean it, Edwin?"

"Hear me, my gentle love," he continued, pressing her to his heart; "my father, too, and ye whose rugged breasts enshrine the bold and daring heart—hear me all. It chanced upon the field, when, in the heat of battle, this arm preserved my sovereign's life, the grateful monarch drew off his ring, and bade me, when I had a boon to crave, to seek his presence. He has redeemed his pledge, and here I hold," he continued, pulling a parchment from his breast, "a sealed pardon for the gang."

Loud cheers followed this announcement, and many a hardened feature was moistened with the dew of tenderness, as life, liberty, and home seemed once more restored. Edwin waved his hand, and with strong animation continued, "The king has need of soldiers to meet the approaching conflict; here is a brave troop devoted to his service—is it not so?"

Another shout followed this appeal, and Edwin firmly added, "Enough, my brave companions; our

pardon is secure, and the royal army waiting to receive us. And now, my father," he continued, again bending on his knee, with Isabelle at his side, "will you withhold your blessing?"

The noble palmer once more extended his hands, and placed them on the heads of the youthful pair. A tear stood trembling in his eyes, as he raised them up in devotion and fervently uttered, "May the best of blessings rest upon my son—pardon from the offended Majesty of Heaven. And you, my child," he continued, turning to Isabelle, "droop not, sweet innocent; may every joy be thine, showered from the abundant stores of bounteous Providence!"

"My father," exclaimed the agitated girl, "speak of my father."

"Your father, Isabelle, is safe," replied Lord William; and laying his hand upon his breast, "vindictive feelings cannot harbour here." He turned towards the assembled throng, "And you, my guests, as well as the new and gallant troops of Henry, partake of the good cheer that spreads the festive board. Henceforth let peace and happiness abound."

Shouts of satisfaction and joyous congratulations were heard on every side, as they all sat down to the banquet. Ronald alone was missing, for, true to his word, he watched the couch of his degraded master.

On the following day Edwin marched his troops to the field. The encampment was broken up; but about a mile from Stoke, upon the banks of the Trent, he found the armies engaged in deadly conflict. He still wore the black plumes, as a mark of distinction amongst his men, and threw himself into the very thickest of the fight. The band emulated their leader. The German troops gave way to their desperate charge, and Edwin and his gang mainly contributed to the fortune of the day. Henry triumphed: Simnel was taken, and became a menial domestic in his sovereign's palace.

THE GREAT BELT.

THE GREAT BELT.

"Life is a tale begun, whose hastening close
Will make the matter clear ; the mystery
Elucidate or solve ; the incidents,
However wild, explain and justify."—BALL'S *Creation*.

DURING the long war between England and France, which terminated in the abdication of Buonaparte and his retreat to Elba, it is well known that, at various times, most of the continental powers were compelled by Napoleon, and the presence of a French army, to enter into an alliance with the emperor, and to assist him in his career of ambition.

In the northern parts of Europe this influence would have been ruinous to British commerce, but for the gallant services of our navy and the daring prowess of our seamen ; for one look at the map will show the utter impossibility there is for ships to proceed to the ports of the Baltic, except through the very heart, as it were, of the kingdom of Denmark. With Russia and Sweden we were at peace, but with Denmark we were at war ; and thus the market in Russia must have been closed against British produce (excepting that which was conveyed over land from Gottenburg to Stockholm, and thence by a precarious voyage to the Gulf of Finland), but that the proud flag, which Nelson had triumphantly borne before the conquered ships and batteries of Copenhagen, still floated in supremacy through every part of the northern seas ; and our enemies had the morti-

fication of seeing large fleets, composed of several hundred merchant-ships, richly freighted, passing within a short distance of their shores under the protection of men-of-war, that were constantly employed in convoying them.

These ships, arriving from different parts of England, assembled at the general rendezvous in Wingoe Sound, on the coast of Sweden; and when a sufficient number were collected, they were formed into divisions, and made their passage through the Cattegat into the Great Belt, where, during the summer, ships of the line and frigates were stationed at proper distances to assist the convoys, and to guard them over the Baltic Sea into the Gulf of Finland; and perhaps there never was a more interesting and spirit-stirring spectacle, than the passage of the fleet through the Great Belt.

The merchant-ships, several hundred in number, with their white sails expanded and covering a space of six or seven miles, were led by a ship of the line carrying the commodore's flag, a-head of which none dared advance. On each side of the fleet, at intervals, were frigates, sloops, and gun-brigs, to defend the merchant-vessels and keep them within bounds; and the rear was protected by other frigates and brigs, which were also occasionally employed in taking dull sailers in tow, and, with every stitch of canvas set, dragging them up into the body of the fleet. Close to the shore, the enemy's gun-boats and well-manned armed vessels could be seen rowing along, and ready to take advantage of any shift of wind that might force a straggler within a probable distance of being captured, when they would boldly dart upon their prey, and, in spite of every exertion on the part of the British men-of-war, were not unfrequently successful. If the wind died away and a calm ensued, the gun-boats were particularly active, for their long guns seldom failed of doing considerable execution; and the rapidity with which they shifted their

stations, and the smallness of the object they offered for a mark, generally enabled them to escape with impunity from a fire in return. On the land, strong detachments of horse-artillery kept parallel with the gun-vessels, ready to repel any attack which might be made by the boats of the men-of-war, supported by the armed brigs of a light draught of water.

It was on a lovely day, at the commencement of July, 1811, that an English seventy-four, stationed off Reefness, observed a convoy approaching, and having joined it, proceeded in company through the Great Belt to the south end of Langeland, where she left the convoy with a westerly wind, and trimmed her sails to return to her old station. They gradually receded from each other, till the seventy-four appeared the only ship floating on the smooth waters of the Belt.

The weather was extremely beautiful; the cool breeze tempered the atmospheric heat, and swelled the sleeping sails; the sun shone in rich splendour, the shore scenery was finely picturesque, and the enemy's armed vessels were slowly returning to their different ports, disappointed in their expectations of a prize.

The tall ship glided swiftly along, and on the star-board side of the quarter-deck the captain and the first-lieutenant paced to and fro in earnest conversation; many of the officers were walking on the lar-board side, whilst the seamen grouped themselves together on the fore-castle, sporting their sea wit, and cracking their nautical jokes at the expense of the Danish flotilla. Suddenly the lieutenant quitted the side of his chief, and immediately afterwards the shrill pipe of the boatswain's mate was heard, followed by his deep, hoarse voice, exclaiming, "Bargemen, away! Pinnacers, away!" In a few minutes the crews of the two boats named were on the quarter-deck, and received orders to hold themselves in readiness for night duty. The captain of marines was also directed

to have a party equipped for the same service, and a few of the best men were selected from the ship's company to complete the expedition.

About midnight, when a little to the southward of the track between Nyborg, on the island of Fünen, and Corsoer on the island of Zealand, the boats, with the addition of a double-banked cutter, put off from the ship under the command of the second-lieutenant, who received orders to lie in the course which a vessel going from one town to another would probably take, and detain every boat he might fall in with. Should nothing present itself that night, his boats were to make for the islet in mid-passage, and, lying concealed throughout the day, again to row guard as soon as darkness returned.

These orders were punctually obeyed; and nothing appearing worth their notice, Lieutenant Montagu, at the approach of daylight, repaired with his small squadron to the islet; the boats were carefully concealed, and the men directed not to appear at all, where it was possible they might be seen. The ship had continued her course, and no traces of her were visible; the day passed on, the westerly wind prevailed, and just before sunset, Montagu, by the aid of his glass, discovered several small vessels preparing to quit Nyborg, and one, that was larger and better equipped than the others, he knew to be the mail-packet. This pleasing intelligence he communicated to his brother-officers and the seamen and marines, and joyful expectation of a rich prize animated all. It was evident that the Danes were unacquainted with the proximity of the boats; the signal-posts had reported the ship to be at anchor off Ramsøe, and thus they indulged in hopes of sending across to Zealand without any danger of capture.

Darkness came on; the British boats were extended in a line, and after two hours of anxiety, Lieutenant Montagu, who occupied the central station, had the satisfaction of seeing a dark object approaching

through the twilight gloom, and running down full upon him. As it neared his boat, he audibly whispered, " 'Tis the packet! Be ready, men!" and the utmost silence prevailed, broken only by the dashing and the hissing of the spray, as the Danish vessel cut through the yielding waters.

It was known that the packet (a cutter of about thirty tons burthen) never went unarmed, and every heart beat high as she came down booming before the wind. Montague forbore making the preconcerted signal to the other boats, as he was not without a hope of taking the packet by surprise. He therefore placed the barge right in her track, and was not discovered till close under her bows; when, by a judicious movement, he clapped alongside and boarded with his men. Resistance would have been equally foolish and unavailing; and thus, without a blow being struck, or scarcely any noise being made, he took possession of his prize. To send everyone below, whilst he shortened sail and brought the cutter to the wind, was but the work of a few minutes; and he was soon made sensible, by several musket-shots, that his other boats had been equally on the alert, and were bringing the vessels to. In less than an hour nine market-vessels, laden with goods and every delicacy of the season, and the packet, with passengers and baggage, were captured. But there was also, in a national point of view, a more important seizure made; for so sudden and unexpected had been the attack, that the captain had not time to sink the mail, and thus very important despatches, together with an immense number of notes on the bank of Denmark, fell into the hands of the English.

Montagu had ordered the marines and three seamen to remain with him on board the cutter, and had sent the barge away to assist his comrades. He then descended to the cabin of the packet, where the passengers, in indescribable terror, were crowded together and uttering bitter lamentations. But there was one

who attracted his attention more than all the rest, and awakened every generous emotion of his heart. It was a young female of exquisite beauty, apparently about seventeen years of age, but her countenance was that of fixed despair. Her dress was elegant, though somewhat soiled and negligently put on; and at her feet lay a female domestic, giving way to convulsive bursts of anguish. Montagu felt all the soft yearnings of tenderness and compassion stealing through his breast; he gazed in admiration and with pity on his captive; their eyes met, and in an instant she flung herself before him and clung to his knees. At the first moment, the sudden throbbings of unexpressed agony prevented her speaking; but recovering more self-possession, in a voice sweetly musical, she addressed the astonished lieutenant in a language half English, half French, and implored him not to detain her as a prisoner, for she was hastening to the court of Denmark, a supplicant for a father's life. Her beseeching look, her earnest entreaty, her flowing tears, and her humble attitude, distracted the mind of poor Montagu; and, for an instant, he cursed the chance which compelled him to be cruel. In vain he pointed out the impossibility of releasing the vessel; in vain he assured his lovely prisoner that she would be safe, and that in all probability the captain, when acquainted with the particulars, would instantly set her at liberty. "One hour's delay," she urged, "might bereave her of a parent, the only one she had known from infancy. The sentence of death was suspended over him for a breach of military etiquette, and none but the king could save his life."

Poor Montagu, who had never shrunk in the hour of peril, now trembled with conflicting emotions; the whole scene was so sudden, the appeal so touching, that he stood undecided how to act. In a few minutes, he raised the beauteous mourner; but she clung still closer to him, and in accents of extreme woe bewailed her lot, till nature was subdued and she sank sense-

less at his feet. That was indeed a terrible moment for Montagu, and he swore that, if it cost him his own life, or, what was equally dear, his future prospects of promotion, he would break through his duty, and set her on shore that night.

Leaving the wretched girl to the care of her servant and the passengers, he went on deck ; but the proud feeling of a victor had vanished. It is true, he rallied sufficiently to issue his orders with accuracy and judgment ; but the features of that beseeching countenance were stamped upon his heart, and the soul-thrilling accents of her sweet voice still sounded in his ears, imploring for a father's life. He knew that a dereliction of duty might bring him to a court-martial,—he knew that all attempts at concealment would be vain ; nevertheless he was determined, and directing the captain of the packet to have the lady's luggage in readiness, he ordered the crew of the barge to stow it in their boat. As commanding officer he was not amenable for his conduct to any one present ; but in this instance, he informed his brave fellows of a few leading incidents connected with his situation, and his intention of landing the lovely girl immediately. Selecting, therefore, a few of his stoutest followers to remain in the cutter, he put the Danish crew and passengers on board the other vessels, and directed the next in command to proceed towards Ramsøe with the prizes, under easy sail. But who can describe the enthusiastic gratitude of the pious daughter, as, sitting by the side of Montagu and closely wrapped from the keen night-air in his boat-cloak, she felt assured by his persuasions that her speed would be accelerated instead of retarded by her capture ; that a very short time would land her on the shores of Zealand, which she now saw rising into view, and that, as it was almost calm, had she remained in the packet she could have made but little progress. Delicious to the ear of the lieutenant was the voice of the sweet girl, and he drank deeply of the intoxicating draught of pleasure.

The seamen appeared to be all actuated by one generous sentiment; but as the barge was now rapidly approaching the shore, great caution was necessary not to excite alarm. The frowning batteries of Corsoer were rising in the gloom, when the coxswain descried a boat near them; the men instantly lay on their oars, but Montagu, finding nothing to apprehend, boldly rushed alongside, and discovered that it was a small fisherman, who, unsuspecting of danger, had come out to fish. His terror at being taken was extreme, and Montagu, for a few minutes, suffered it to have full scope; he then proposed that he would permit him to go unmolested, with a reward in the bargain, if he would pledge himself to land the lady and her attendant at Corsoer, to which place, then at a short distance, he was immediately to proceed.

The poor fisherman and his companion gladly assented, the lady's luggage was put into their boat, and she prepared to follow; but first turning to Montagu with unrepressed thankfulness, she threw her arms round his neck, buried her face upon his bosom, and burst into tears. With every hallowed and pure sentiment of fervent devotion the lieutenant raised her up, and imprinting one chaste kiss upon her cheek, assisted her to change her embarkation; he then wrapped his cloak around her, pressed her burning hand to his beating heart, uttered a faint farewell, and returned to his seat in the barge. The fair girl held out her hand to the coxswain, which he grasped with eagerness and raised to his lips. That hand contained her purse, which she tendered for his acceptance, to be divided amongst his men; but with the generosity, though with the characteristic bluntness of a seaman, he dashed a tear from his eye, and, rejecting the proffered gift, exclaimed, "No; I'll be d—d if I do! 'Twould be a black score in the purser's account at the last day."

The boats separated: the lieutenant followed the

fisherman till he saw him enter the harbour of Corsoer, and then, with conflicting feelings, he directed the coxswain to steer by a bright star, which he knew would guide his course towards Ramsøe.

But they had not proceeded far, before the morning twilight was brightly glimmering in the east. The officer, whom Montagu had left in charge of the prizes, had obeyed his instructions, and kept under easy sail. The packet and the market-boats were visible to the barge, slowly proceeding on their course; but there was also visible that which did not seem to be observed on board the prizes. A portion of the Danish flotilla, which had attended the convoy up the shores of the Belt, in returning to their harbours, had discovered the captured vessels, and were evidently in eager pursuit.

Boldly did the stout bargemen stretch their sinewy arms to the oars, that bent to their rapid strokes; gallantly did the swift boat dart over the rippling waters; musket after musket was fired by the young lieutenant, to warn the prizes of their danger; but it was not till the headmost of the gunboats had got them within reach of shot, that they seemed sensible of being chased. Then, indeed, all sail was crowded, and every effort made to accelerate their speed. Still the gunboats gained upon them, and the headmost (which had greatly outstripped its companions) was preparing to throw a destructive fire of grape and canister at the distance of a cable's length; when Montagu in the barge boldly dashed alongside, and though at first repulsed, yet, after a short but desperate struggle, succeeded in getting on board. Here, hand to hand, the contest raged, and death smote down his victims. The two lieutenants met. Their bright swords flashed in the red flame of the musketry. Montagu felt that his future hopes principally depended upon that moment; annihilation would be preferable to dishonour, but conquest might possibly regain character, distinction, and all that he feared

was lost. His steel passed through the heart of the Dane, who fell lifeless on the deck.

A shout—a thrilling, soul-stirring shout—burst from the barge's crew, as they rushed headlong upon the enemy, who, deprived of their gallant leader, called for quarter, and surrendered. The gunboat's head was immediately put round to meet the approaching flotilla, and the heavy charge of the eighteen-pounder, designed for the British, was poured with destructive precision on the advancing foe. Again she was put before the wind, and the stern-gun, well plied, did considerable execution. Several of the enemy's vessels were sunk or disabled; but though the daring of British seamen for a while kept the whole in check, yet the Danes still pressed on, apparently determined to recapture the prizes or perish.

Montagu perceived their object; but the tall masts of the seventy-four were now visible, and he knew that a short time would suffice to bring her near enough to induce the Danes to discontinue the chase, lest they should be unable to retreat. But the great force of the enemy, the incessant fire which they kept up, together with their superior sailing, left him but small hopes of escape. Suddenly the seventy-four shifted her position; the tall masts were concealed under clouds of canvas, and the lieutenant became sensible that his brave captain was hastening to his rescue as speedily as a slant wind would permit.

The momentous struggle arrived; two of the largest gunboats ranged in amongst the prizes. Montagu, clapping his helm astarboard, ran stem on to the first, and by a well-directed shot from his stern-gun sent the other to the bottom. The conflict now became terrible; each vessel, as it came up, surrounded the gunboat of the lieutenant; the barge's crew fought with cool and undaunted bravery, but overpowered by numbers, and many of them severely wounded, they were reluctantly compelled to yield.

But the prizes were saved. The Danes, eager to recover their commodore, had lost too much time to think of further pursuit; and Montagu, whilst stretched bleeding on the deck, his head supported on the shoulder of the wounded coxswain, saw the certainty of their escape, gave one feeble cheer, and closed his eyes in insensibility.

Captain Wilkinson was much attached to Montagu, and heard with considerable pain the causes of his capture, as they were detailed by the second in command; who, from motives of personal hostility, had given a colouring to the whole transaction, which perverted the truth, although adhering to circumstances which were undeniable. Of his ultimate fate they were ignorant, but it seemed most probable that death had cleared the forfeit for his breach of discipline.

But, happily for Montagu, it was not so; and on recovering from a long attack of fever and delirium, he found himself in a splendid apartment, on a bed of down, surrounded by curtains of rich velvet, and dim recollections of the past came crowding confusedly upon his mind. Visions of an incomprehensible nature floated before him: his wounds still gave him pain, but feelings of a pleasing and consolatory kind soothed his breast, and he sank into a deep and refreshing slumber.

Montagu awoke from his sleep with the objects of his dream still strongly impressed upon his imagination; he unclosed his eyes, but the vision of his slumbers appeared be realized, for he actually beheld the eyes of that lovely female bent full upon him, whilst a benign look of compassion gave a peculiar and interesting expression to her face. It was, in fact, the beautiful girl herself; and Montagu seized her extended hand and pressed it to his lips, as the tears of pleasure chased each other down her glowing cheeks.

Emilie Zeyfferlein, on landing at Corsoer, had

hastened to Copenhagen, and through the influence of a friend at court, obtained an interview with royalty. She had, in fact, been the first bearer of the account of the capture of the packet, and she did not fail to extol, in appropriate terms, the devoted generosity of the young English officer. A respite, however, was all she could obtain for her father, with a promise that the circumstances connected with his alleged fault should be strictly examined into. With this she hastened back to the prison where her parent was confined. But, on passing through Nyborg, she heard of the action that had been fought, saw the wounded and insensible lieutenant, and after an interview with her father, she returned to attend upon poor Montagu.

The Crown Prince heard of these circumstances, which the Danes,—naturally a brave people,—had extolled with admiration. Montagu was removed to the palace of the prince, who had conversed with the English prisoners taken with their young officer, and received from them a history of the transaction, and Emilie was permitted to undertake the office of nurse. Carefully and vigilantly had she watched and attended him through his perilous illness; and latterly her whole soul had become engrossed by the hope of saving her benefactor: for it been ascertained that the charges against her father had originated in malevolence, and consequently his life was not only spared, but he was released from confinement and retained in the immediate suite of the prince.

Montagu would have recovered fast, but there were two things that greatly impeded his convalescence; the first was an agonizing apprehension of the consequences of his breach of naval discipline, and the second arose from the painful certainty that he must part from the fair girl, who now seemed bound to his heart as part and parcel of his very existence.

The survivors of the barge's crew had been ex-

changed. Captain Wilkinson had made strict inquiries of them relative to the affair, and their replies so clearly proved the humanity and bravery of Montagu, as to raise him greatly in the personal estimation of his worthy and excellent commander. But public duty prevailed over private feelings, and though determined to do all in his power to aid his young friend, yet there was no alternative but a court-martial. As soon as Montagu could undergo the fatigue, he wrote to his captain, detailing and explaining every circumstance; and this letter, with a recommendatory one from the Crown Prince, speaking in high terms of the young lieutenant, was forwarded to the admiral.

But Admiral G—— was a strict and stern disciplinarian, unacquainted with those finer feelings of the mind that prompt the tender mercies. As he could not appreciate the young lieutenant's motives, there appeared to him no palliation of the offence; but he rather deemed the yielding to female influence an aggravation. Consequently, the letters, though intended to be forwarded to the Admiralty, went no further than himself; and Montagu, decorated with orders presented by a generous enemy, returned to his ship in Wingoe Sound, to be placed under arrest by his countrymen and friends.

The winter was at hand, and the large ships returned to England. The flag for a court-martial was hoisted on board the *Raisonable*, in Sheerness harbour; and the gallant Lieutenant Rivers, who lost his leg on board Nelson's own ship in the battle of Trafalgar, was active in his exertions for the almost desponding prisoner.

I was then but a boy, but I well remember the circumstances. The noble-minded Captain Clay sat as president at the head of the table, and the other officers were ranged on each side, with the judge-advocate at the bottom. On the left of this latter personage stood Montagu, in full uniform, but with-

out the emblems of distinction which he had received from the regent of Denmark. He still carried his left arm in a sling, and his forehead displayed a ruddy scar from a wound yet scarcely healed; his face was pale from his long sickness and agitation, which Captain Clay no sooner observed, than he directed that the prisoner should be accommodated with a chair, behind which stood the provost-marshal with his naked sword.

The court was opened, and the great cabin was immediately crowded in every part; whilst many a brilliant from the heart of sympathy hung on the eyelids of the daring and intrepid tars, who loved a generous deed, and mourned its sad requital.

The charges were read, and the witnesses called. The first was the officer to whom Montagu had given the command of the prizes, and his evidence was heard with pain by every member of the court, particularly as its main points were corroborated by those who were subsequently examined. The barge's crew confirmed that part of the testimony relative to their proceeding to Corsoer; but neither the respect due to the court, nor the fear of consequences, could deter the sturdy but honest coxswain from giving free utterance to the fulness of his heart. He was a remarkably fine-looking man; and as he stood on the right of the judge-advocate, with his black handkerchief carelessly knotted round the collar of his white shirt, and his flaxen hair curling wildly over his face, he presented an admirable specimen of Britain's pride. Occasionally a glance of deep meaning was thrown towards the prisoner, who had long valued and esteemed this humble friend.

To expect, or even command the coxswain merely to answer the interrogatories that were put to him, was out of the question; he reasoned in his own way upon the evidence he gave, and drew such a picture of the distress of the duteous daughter, that there was scarcely a dry eye in the court. It was the language

of nature in its most simple, but at the same time its most eloquent form. It was a seaman appealing to the hearts of seamen in their own peculiar way.

"God bless your honours!" said he, throwing out his right arm, and advancing close to the table; "ould Jack Tiller is not to be told that the Articles of War must be obeyed, and death is denounced against them as breaks 'em. But I pities they as wants pity; and though duty to our king and country must be done, yet there's a neglect of duty to the great Commander-in-chief, whose voice we have so often heard upon the waters, that will bring us to a more terrible court-martial than this here, where your honours know, that if being marcful is a crime, every one on you is as guilty as my brave officer there. And oh! if you had but seen her when she grappled the lieutenant—her beautiful eyes swimming in tears, as if the spring tide of sorrow was rushing from her heart——"

"Witness," exclaimed the president, interrupting him, "you must confine yourself to answer questions, without going into particulars."

"I wull, your honours, indeed I wull!" replied the coxswain; "but if you had only heard that sweet voice plead for a father's life,—remember, your honours, it was her father, and some of your honours, I dare say, has got lovely children, though God forbid that any on 'em should ever have to work such a traverse as she had;—yes, your honours, it was her father,—and, poor thing, she had no mother——" and here the brave fellow's voice, which had become tremulous, wholly ceased, whilst a strong feeling of sympathy pervaded every soul present.

"Witness, have you anything more to say?" inquired the president.

"God bless your honour again and again for that kindness!" answered the coxswain. "I knew you would never throw a poor tar slap aback for speaking a bit of his mind. I've sarved my king, God bless

him! many years; and some of your honours knows that Jack Tiller never wanted a tow-line when boarding an enemy. Captain England, there, will be a voucher for my experience in them 'ere matters, and so I think I can tell when a brave man does his duty; and as to Mr. Montagu, may I be—I beg pardon, your honours; but I was going to say, if ever a seaman fought as a seaman should fight, it was Mr. Montagu. But what's the worth of a heart that has no compassion for a signal of distress, and would leave a fellow-creature to be wrecked when a spare anchor would save 'em?"

"Attend, coxswain," said the president. "Do you think the prisoner had any other motive in going over to Corsoer than that which you have mentioned?"

"Prisoner, your honours?" replied the coxswain, doubtingly; and then, as if suddenly recollecting, he went on,—“oh, ay, I understand now,—you means Mr. Montagu. As for his motives, I can't speak, but I know he had his sidearms and pistols."

"Do you think that the cause of his quitting the prizes was pure generosity?" asked the president.

"If it warn't, may I be—I beg pardon, your honours," said the coxswain; "and who can tell, when they see the big round tears following in each other's wake down the cheeks of beauty,—who can tell what tack they may stand on, or to what point of the compass they may lead? A brave man turns 'em into a sort of language, as quick as a marine turns into his hammock; there's no twisting 'em end for end, or converting 'em deliberately into twice-laid."

"The lady must have been very beautiful to have produced so great a *fascination*," said a young member of the court.

"Produced what, your honour?" asked the coxswain, who immediately thought of the purse. "Why, ay, she did press it on me, to be sure, but I wouldn't touch a stiver; and as for her beauty, why your honour can judge for yourself." The coxswain turned

round to some one who stood at a short distance behind him, enveloped in a boat cloak, and whom he now handed forward, to the great surprise of the court. Having done this, he took his station respectfully by the side of the person he had introduced, and in a business-like way removed the cloak, when Emilie Zeyfferlein, in all her loveliness, stood revealed to their eager gaze.

Expressions of admiration issued from every part of the crowded cabin, but they were uttered only in an audible whisper. The president looked round him in a state of perplexed embarrassment; the members of the court rose from their seats with marked respect; and the junior captain, who was the nearest to her, immediately tendered her his chair. Captain Wilkinson came round to her side and offered kind encouragement, whilst ill-repressed bursts of honest approval for several minutes issued from the bold tars outside the cabin.

But who could paint the feelings or the look of Montagu at the wholly unexpected appearance of one who, at that very moment, occupied every thought of his heart! It would be impossible. She looked imploringly towards the president; she tried to speak, but her voice faltered, yet her presence carried more energy and force with it than all the powers of language. She had braved the elemental strife of winds and waves; and there, a devotee to gratitude and love, she stood, ready to plead for her benefactor.

But this state of things could not be suffered to continue long. The president adjourned the court for the day; the prisoner was removed to his private cabin; and Emilie was conducted by the worthy Captain Clay to his wife and family, till the sensation which had been created had somewhat subsided.

On the following day the sitting of the court was resumed. The trial proceeded. A verdict of guilty was returned, and sentence of death passed upon the prisoner. Montagu heard it with every outward sem-

blance of firmness ;—but oh, the agony of his heart ! He had borne an irreproachable character ; he had bravely fought for his country ; he had an aged mother, who prized him as her dearest and most cherished treasure ; he loved and was beloved ; and to die by an ignominious execution, with thousands of eyes to witness his degradation !—Oh, the rush of thought was dreadful !

But the spirit of the beautiful Emilie was stirred up, her mind was strengthened, her frame was nerved with energetic resolve ; and, without seeing the condemned officer, she returned to the metropolis and sought, by every means within her power, to influence the mercy of the crown in favour of Montagu. The letters from Denmark were but little noticed by the regent, and the loss of lives caused by the defalcation of the doomed one was aggravated by the admiral ; so that the only boon the supplicant could obtain was, that the life of the lieutenant should be spared. This, however, was renewed existence to herself, for whilst he lived, she was prepared to share his lot, whatever it might be, and the heavy weight which threatened to crush the young bud of her future hopes, was removed from her heart. Yet the blow had been too severe for the parent of the prisoner. His situation had been incautiously disclosed to the fond mother ; the tender fibres which bound her to the world were severed, and she sunk to the grave, with no child to close her eyes in death, and to see her laid in the receptacle for perishing mortality.

Montagu was dismissed the service. Every tie that had bound him to his country was broken. He returned with the devoted Emilie to Copenhagen, changed his name, married the lovely girl, and is at this moment a Danish admiral, high in the confidence of the monarch.

THE PAINTER OF DORT:

A Tale of the Reformation.

THE PAINTER OF DORT.

"Scarce had the tortured ear, dejected, heard
Rome's loud anathema, but heartless, dead
To every purpose, men nor wish'd to live,
Nor dared to die."—SHENSTONE.

AFTER the great work of the Reformation had commenced in the Low Countries, it progressively advanced, notwithstanding the denunciations from the papal throne, the establishment of the Inquisition, and the trial by ordeal. But the fires that were kindled for human sacrifice drew down the vengeance of heaven upon those persecutors, who blasphemously supposed that the God of mercy, like the Moloch of old, was a being that delighted in blood.

From the year 752, when Boniface, the strong defender of papacy, was massacred, down to the time when the Spaniards, under the Duke d'Alva, held supreme control, atrocities of the blackest dye were perpetrated. The *Bloody Tribunal*, unsatiated by a succession of victims, still ardently thirsted for more, and the wretched inhabitants of many parts of Holland were driven to seek a shelter in the deep recesses of the woods and forests, where, being reduced to the greatest distress through hunger and despair, they became like the wild savages who feast on human flesh, forsaking the paths of humanity, and cherishing no other feelings than hatred and revenge against their destroyers, from whom they obtained the appellation of "Gueuxes."

The Spaniards had rendered themselves so obnoxious by their tyranny, and so terrible by their cruelties, that, whilst a deep abhorrence filled the hearts of the groaning people, a heavy fear also pressed upon their spirits, and rendered them the abject slaves to despotic power. Yet there were some who boldly proclaimed their creed, and shouted amidst the flames, "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" The agonies of burning were soothed by the bright prospects of a crown of glory, and the pangs which consumed the body were endured under a sure and certain hope that the soul would be clad in the everlasting robes of righteousness within the realms of bliss.

Every hellish instrument which ingenious barbarians could devise was put in requisition by the Spaniards, to deter the Hollanders from quitting the pale of the Romish church; the mutilating rack, the iron boot which crushed the sufferer's limbs, the screws upon the joints, and the searing with boiling lead, were used by these earthly demons as emanating from the commands of the meek and lowly Jesus, who in his last mortal agony exclaimed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" But there was a voice in the dying groans of these martyrs to their faith—a still small voice that went from heart to heart, and in the dark and silent hour of the night the cry ascended to the footstool of Omnipotence, "Awake! why sleepest thou, O LORD? Arise, cast us not off for ever! Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercy's sake!"

Amongst those places that figured in history during the progress of the Reformation, the town of Dort in Holland bears conspicuous mention. It is situated on the river Maese, at the northern part of an island bearing the same name, and about twelve miles south-east from the city of Rotterdam. In Dort were held

some of the most important synods, and here were laid the foundations of those strong bulwarks, which have for centuries resisted the encroachments of Catholicism.

It was about the year 1570, that the poet and painter John Van Kuik Wouters breathed his inspiring numbers to the harp, and transferred to the canvas the glowing tints of nature, that seemed a silent mockery of life. Van Kuik was a native of Dort, and had been early instructed to oppose the tenets of the church of Rome, whilst in his studious researches after truth he had detected its numerous fallacies, and imbibed the strongest sentiments of horror at its merciless maledictions. He avoided society, lest in some unguarded moment he might betray the secret workings of his soul, and draw down ruin on his head: in the depths of seclusion his heart communed with the spirit of poesy, and he could only be induced to quit his retirement by the calls of friendship, or the demands which nature made for subsistence. His life was a life of unimpeached integrity: not a breath could sully his fair fame, and even the oppressors of the land, whilst they longed to bind him to the stake as an avowed *heretic*, yet they were restrained by admiration for his works, and respectful awe for his unblemished reputation.

But in the secret recesses of his chamber, Van Kuik mourned over the degradation of his fallen country; instead of strains of harmony which his young heart loved, his harp produced sounds of wailing and lamentation,—his pencil no longer revelled in the sunlit scenes of nature, but dark and moody countenances frowned upon the canvas with looks of sullen discontent.

The art of painting on glass was at this time much practised in Holland, and Van Kuik, who excelled in it, had received orders to complete a window for one of the great churches at Rotterdam. His mind revolted at the thoughts of decorating the temples of

idolatry; yet, as his refusal would have involved his existence, he repaired to the city for the purpose of viewing the building, and taking the dimensions for his laborious task. He was returning one evening to his lodgings, when, in an obscure street, an elderly female, whom he had observed following him, touched his arm, and uttered the salutation, "Peace!"

"Peace from above, which passeth all understanding," replied Van Kuik, "rest upon you!"

"Remove the unclean thing far from thee!" rejoined the female. "Canst thou touch pitch and not be defiled? Wherefore dost thou say, Peace? He that is not for us is against us!"

"Reveal your meaning, woman," said Van Kuik, "for these are no times for parables."

"Is the child of genius then so dull?" inquired the female, as she fixed her eyes upon his countenance; "is he so dull as not to read my riddle? The red hand of the destroyer is stretched forth; the sheep are scattered on the hills, and the shepherd"—here her voice faltered,—"*is smitten from on high!* Is not the altar polluted? Should men bow to stocks and stones? And thou," she continued mournfully, "thou, on whom his hopes were fixed—thou, too, art fallen from the faith!"

A vague idea that her words had reference to the occupation in which he was engaged, and a feeling of shame at being sensible that the reproof was merited, kept Van Kuik silent. The darker shades of twilight were rapidly descending, yet there remained enough of light to show the features of the female. Her age appeared to be about sixty; but there was an enthusiastic fervour in her look, and a restless disquietude in her eye, which spoke the soul to dare, the will to do.

"Thou art rebuked!" she said, "and it entereth more into a wise man, than a hundred stripes into a fool. But come!" she exclaimed, forcibly grasping

his arm and passing him to take the lead,—“come! the *Master* hath need of thee.”

An indefinable sensation filled the breast of the painter, as he followed the mysterious woman through several streets, till they stopped at an arched door that stood out upon a massive stone wall, which bounded a small garden and a low building. Here the female, after cautiously looking both ways, gave a knock, and Van Kuik, with some feeling of mistrust, saw her enter and immediately shut him out. He knew that his religious opinions rendered him obnoxious to the priests, and the chapel-like look of the house created a suspicion that he was betrayed into their hands; nor was this idea decreased when, in a few minutes, the female again stood at his side, but from whence she came he could not even conjecture. The door had not been opened, for he had steadfastly fixed his eyes upon it, and it had never moved; yet there she stood by his side. Van Kuik drew back, but it was not from a cowardly fear; his mind was determined to brave the worst, yet an impressive dread that he saw before him an agent of the Evil One quailed his strong spirit, and for a moment subdued his manly courage. The female seemed in some measure to be aware of what was passing in his thoughts; for, as she turned and beckoned him to follow, she mildly said, “The house of mourning inviteth thee, for the finger of death presseth heavily on the eyelids that must soon close for ever! But come, return thee to the paths of thy father, let thy faith be strengthened, and may thy last end be like to his.”

They both turned the porch, and then Van Kuik observed that a part of the wall was so constructed, that it opened from the inside; but this was so admirably managed, as to escape the most observant eye. He passed within the wall and entered a neat garden, from whence he was ushered into a small apartment, which evidently was appropriated to divine worship, according to the modes used by the Protestant

reformers. There was an altar, but neither images nor any gorgeous display. A painting of the Crucifixion (which Van Kuik knew for his own) was placed above it; and a dim light from a single lamp shed its pale lustre on the surrounding objects. Before the altar, stretched on a pallet, lay a venerable and aged man, in the habiliments of the ministry. His grey hairs descended from beneath the close black cap which covered the upper part of his head, and hung clustering round his shoulders, as he feebly raised himself up, and with a smile, that played upon his features like the faint flickering gleam from the dying watch-fire, he welcomed the painter to his presence. But who can tell the feelings of Van Kuik when he recognized, in the death-stricken man, his early pastor, the instructor who had instilled the precepts of virtue in his heart, and had taught him to remember his Creator in the days of his youth? Van Kuik had been left an orphan, and was bequeathed by his parents to the worthy pastor's care, who had fulfilled the promises he gave. But the strangeness of the times had parted them, and Jasper Van Heiden had removed to Germany. The business of the Reformation had, however brought him to Rotterdam; and here he had organized a plan for overturning the dominion of the Spaniards, and destroying the despotic power of Rome over his fellow-countrymen.

The harvest of his prospects was nearly ripe for the sickle; but it pleased the Omnipotent to lay his hand upon him, and the pious pastor bowed himself to the stroke. He had heard of his foster-child being in the city, and through the agency of the old female he had procured this last, this trying interview. But the sight of the venerable minister had awakened other recollections in Van Kuik, which even the solemnity of the scene and the awfulness of the moment could not suppress. He looked earnestly around the apartment for one who had ever been present in his midnight dreams, and had become associated with his waking thoughts. They had shared the same cradle in their

infancy—they had been brought up together through childhood in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and in the days which marked the bounds between childhood and maturity,

“Each was to each a dearer self,
The same,—distinguish’d by their sex alone.”

But he perceived her not, and the old man, guessing his wishes, softly uttered, “Yet a little while, and this immortal spirit will pass away, whilst her whom thou seekest will remain with thee. But come, my son; for on thee the mantle must fall—thou must lead thy people from captivity; thou must smite the smiters, and break the rod of iron. May HE, who knows our weakness, now remember the dust that is prostrate before Him, and give me strength to glorify His name.”

Van Kuik approached, and the dying pastor briefly related to him the plans which had been formed, and the names of those who were engaged. He also confided the secret signal by which the party were to recognise each other, and empowered him to act so as to give information of his death.

“And now, my son,” said he, “there remains but one duty more, and the scenes of time must close on me for ever.” He touched a small bell, and in a few minutes his daughter advanced from an inner room. She was habited in deep black, and her flaxen hair hung dishevelled on her bosom. She raised her head, and Van Kuik saw that her mild blue eyes were filled with weeping. She extended her hand, but the warm gush of affection could not be restrained in the ardent soul of the artist; he drew her nearer to him, he pressed her to his heart, and their tears ran mingling down together.

“Kneel, my children,” exclaimed the father, “and ere the pulse shall cease to beat, receive an old man’s blessing.” They knelt by his side, he joined their hands, and then laid his own upon their heads. Oh, what a sight was that,—youth receiving the benedic-

tion of expiring age! No voice was heard; there was not even the motion of the lips, for the prayer was in the heart. The old female had bent her knees before the altar, and there was a deep communion of the soul. The most profound stillness prevailed for several minutes, when the pressure of the aged hands relaxed, and the dying Christian reclined himself backward on the couch. Van Kuik and Agatha still continued in the silent pleadings with Almighty wisdom; the dutious daughter implored for the life of her father, but her petition was arrested by a gentle sigh which he uttered, as if he had been sensible of the entreaty. She looked upon his face—his eyes were closed—a heavenly smile rested on his features, but his spirit had flown to HIM who gave it.

As soon as the sacred rites of sepulture were performed on his benefactor, Van Kuik, accompanied by Agatha, returned to Dort, where the spirit of persecution was raging with renewed violence. But the painter had now a great work in hand; he corresponded with the leading men amongst the disaffected, and he longed for the moment to arrive when his country should be free. When the period for mourning had passed, he was united to Agatha, whose devotedness and attachment acted as an incentive to exertion. He now laboured hard in his profession, and succeeded; whilst his frequent visits to various parts of the country excited but small suspicion, as they were supposed to be connected with the scenery he was painting. By these means he held secret councils with the emissaries of the Prince of Orange, and at length a day was determined upon, on which an attempt was to be made to seize upon the garrison, and to strike for freedom. In the mean time Van Kuik employed every moment that prudence would permit, in making arrangements with the conspirators in the town, so that whilst the "Gueuxes" attacked from the water, a small but determined band might aid their efforts on the shore.

The house in which Van Kuik resided was pecu-

liarly adapted for secret enterprise; it had been constructed for dangerous times, and contained many places of concealment, which were found truly serviceable in hiding numbers of those individuals who had been proscribed for their religion, and now eagerly entered into the conspiracy. On the roof of his house the artist had contrived to place a quantity of combustible matter, secured from the weather, which was to be lighted by a train of fine tow fixed to a cord, that descended into the secret closet of a concealed reformer, who, on hearing a particular hymn played upon the harp, was to fire the train. This was to be the signal for instantaneously igniting other beacons, and giving notice to the "Gueuxes" for an immediate attack.

The morning of the day arrived, and Van Kuik, with his thick cloak folded about him, stood on the bridge, which received the waters of the Maese beneath its arches to replenish the numerous canals. The market-boats were busily engaged in landing their different loadings, and the scene was one of activity, industry, and gaiety; the day was a day of festival, and numerous parties, in their best attire, had come from the other islands to be present on the occasion; but to the observant eye of Van Kuik, there were many who seemed to claim no acquaintance either with pleasure or with traffic. It is true they joined the throng, and some were supplied with wares for sale; but to the painter, who had been accustomed to look for the secret workings of the soul, that he might give his portraits an intellectual finish, it was plainly discernible that these were the men with whose master-spirits he had held communion; the secret sign passed between them, and Van Kuik returned to his residence. A painting stood upon his easel, representing the Genius of Freedom releasing a captive from bondage; he seized the pencil, put the finishing stroke to the picture, and then sat down to contemplate the work of his imagination. He took his harp, and a thrill of unusual

pleasure played about his heart as his voice blended with the music of the instrument.

"Blest FREEDOM! from thy heavenly height,
Here downward wing thy glorious flight,
And set the captives free.
Oh! burst the bonds that are entwined
By bigotry around the mind,
And give us liberty.

"Yes! liberty of heart to raise
Up to thy throne our prayer and praise,
With humble, earnest breath.
Freedom is GOD,—for GOD is love;—
Oh! send and save us from above,
Or seal my faith in death."

The sounds of the harp still vibrated round the chamber; the last words of the artist had scarcely passed his lips, when he observed a stranger standing by his side and looking steadfastly at the picture. His figure, which was closely muffled up, appeared to be tall and majestic, whilst his countenance was marked with a bitter look of mingling hatred, contempt, and vengeance. There was something so peculiarly commanding in his attitude, and so truly Satanic in the expression of his features, that Van Kuik remained silent.

"You have chosen a fine subject, signor," said the man, pointing to the painting, "and your hymn corresponds with the design. I must, however, alter the first position, though perhaps your last entreaty may be more readily complied with."

Van Kuik placed his harp near the window, and demanded "the cause of this intrusion."

"The servants of the holy office, signor," said the man, "are generally as unexpected as unwelcome. But I have no time for courtly compliments, nor dare I give them to a heretic."

A sick shuddering came upon Van Kuik when the name of the Inquisition was uttered; it seemed like a death-blow to his country and his hope, and in the desperation of the moment, he grasped an instrument

of defence; but before he could raise it in the air, his arms were pinioned by two men, who had been secreted in the chamber; a covering was thrown over his head, to keep him from crying out, and he was hurried away to the bar of the "Bloody Tribunal." This infernal conclave was already assembled, and Van Kuik's sight being suddenly restored, he found himself in the presence of the arbitrators between life and death. By his side stood the old female, through whose means he had been introduced to the dying pastor at Rotterdam, and "who had preferred remaining at the chapel," as she said, "to do the service of the Lord, rather than enter among the abodes of iniquity." A mutual recognition took place between the painter and his aged conductress, whose eyes sparkled with fervent animation as she exclaimed, "Fear not, my son,—thy death is doomed; but it were better that the flames consume the body, than that the immortal soul should suffer endless torments."

The spirit of Van Kuik arose as his peril seemed to increase, and he boldly demanded why he had been dragged from his peaceful home by a self-constituted authority, and what charges they had to bring against him?

"Thou foul and toad-spotted heretic!" replied the chief commissioner, "dost thou come here to question us? But, go to! I will answer thee. Thou hast blasphemed the eucharist,—thou hast made an immaterial shadow of that which is material substance. Art thou not an Anabaptist and a heretic?"

"Who are my accusers?" inquired Van Kuik.

A member of the tribunal, whom the painter immediately knew to be Cornelius Adrians, a Franciscan monk and most subtle disputant, arose from his seat, and crossing his arms upon his breast, impiously repeated the Pater noster as a prelude to the work of hell. He then entered into various accusations against the painter, and particularly dwelt upon his

marriage with the daughter of the pastor, contrary to the rules of the holy Catholic Church, and finished his harangue by praying for judgment against the delinquent.

"Thou art then my accuser," exclaimed Van Kuik, "and yet sittest on the judge's seat!—It would be useless to reply. Yet if time be allowed me, only for one day, I will answer all that has been alleged against me. There is justice at the bar of heaven, and ye, who usurp its power here, cannot deny it me on earth."

"Anathema Maranatha!" cried the chief commissioner; "thou art condemned for thy heresies. Yet the Church is merciful, and if thou and thy family wilt embrace the Catholic religion, and be baptized with its holy baptism, thou shalt not perish in the flames."

A feeling of confidence assured Van Kuik that the secret conspiracy remained undiscovered, and could he but gain his release till night and give the signal, his enemies might be destroyed, and himself and his country saved. The old female, however, who mistook his hesitation for wavering resolution, raised her withered hands to heaven, and prayed that he might be strengthened in this hour of trial. Then turning to her fellow-prisoner, she exclaimed, "Rebuke the tempter, and he will flee from thee!"

"And what if I consent?" inquired the artist.

"Thou shalt not perish by the flames," replied the chief commissioner, "the sword shall do its office on thy neck; for thou must die for thy heresies, but wilt receive a speedy passport into heaven."

"But," rejoined Van Kuik, "if I acknowledge my errors and am baptized, will you not then admit me to be a Christian? Will you not receive me as a brother in the faith?"

"We will, we will," answered Cornelius Adrians, who longed for the conversion of the artist, knowing that it would weaken the cause of the Anabaptists.

"And yet," rejoined Van Kuik, "you would shed

my blood,—the blood of a Christian and a brother, without thinking it a sin.”

The tribunal were silenced by this plain appeal, but it was only to arouse a more deadly hatred.

“Away with him, away with him!” shouted several voices; but Van Kuik was again pleading and the noise was stilled. His arguments, his entreaties, were however urged in vain, and he was sentenced to die.

“Heed them not, my son,” exclaimed the aged female, “but rather glory in thy fate. Nay, plead not with them; for the tender mercies of the wicked are very cruelty, and out of their own mouths shall they be judged. The man who had the hundred sheep in the parable, did not cut the throat of the lost one when it was found, but carried it home with rejoicing and gladness. But ye, hypocrites! perverters of men’s minds! would doom both soul and body to destruction.”

The prisoners were removed from the tribunal, and allowed one hour for recantation. But who can paint the struggles in the artist’s mind? All communication with his friends was cut off; the arch-priest was with him, endeavouring to work his conversion; the signal for lighting the beacon was known only to himself, and thus he beheld a glorious prospect ruined. Van Kuik listened to Cornelius Adrians, and implored, as a last request, that he might be permitted to return once more to his home, and arrange his household before his dissolution. But the prey was now within the snare of the fowler, and the request was peremptorily rejected. Finding death inevitable, Van Kuik employed the fleeting moments in praying for his country; he poured forth his heart at the footstool of Omnipotence, and firmly implored that he might be rescued from the hands of his enemies. His wife, his beloved Agatha, shared his fervent petitions, and with a mind invigorated and strengthened, he yielded himself to the dispensations of unerring Wisdom.

The hour of evening was selected for the horrid sacrifice, that the fiery flashing of the flames might

strike terror to all hearts. The victims were conducted to the stake, guarded by nearly the whole of the Spanish forces, for there were reports of an attempt to rescue the devoted prisoners; but though many a scowling look and threatening aspect appeared amongst the throng, yet they were overawed by the armed band, which formed an impenetrable barrier to communication. The sufferers were bound to the stake, glorifying God; but their voices were soon silenced, for their mouths were gagged, and fire was applied to the faggots which were piled around them.

The distracted Agatha was not at first aware that her husband had been torn from her, but when she became acquainted with her misery and knew his final doom, she hastened to the tribunal and entreated for her husband's life, or for permission to die with him. Both requests were equally disregarded. The stunning moment of agony passed over, and Agatha sought a last interview with the affectionate partner of her fond regard. This, too, was denied; and the unhappy child of wretchedness was compelled to return to her abode, that she might avoid the insults of the Spanish troops. She entered the apartment of her husband, where but a few hours before he had sat in all the pride of manhood; the picture remained upon the easel, and the harp stood where his hands had placed it. Overwhelmed with the intensity of feeling, the fainting Agatha sunk senseless to the ground.

On awaking from her death-like stupor, she found the shades of evening had already closed in darkness; the winds were up, and a wild tempest swept with hurried gushes through the foliage. The dark oak panels of the chamber, which should have frowned in sullen gloom, were illuminated by the red light from a distant fire, and horrid recollections told the wretched woman, that it was that in which her suffering husband was consuming. The windows of the room were open, and the wind moaned round the walls with fearful hollowness. Suddenly the strings of the harp began to vibrate, as if touched by the skilful hand of

him who loved its music. Fond and fervid remembrance rushed upon her heart; she seized the instrument and played the artist's favourite hymn. In an instant the whole atmosphere was brilliantly lighted up, and in a few minutes fires were seen in all directions, whilst a tumultuous shout rent the very air. She had struck the signal, though unknowingly; the conspirators flew to arms; the Gueuxes gave notice of their approach, and the attack commenced.

Fearful grew the scene of blood and slaughter, as the conspirators sought their way to the great lime tree in the Kleveniers Doel, near which the stake had been erected. The Spanish soldiers formed one deep and solid phalanx, to resist the powerful efforts which were making to release the sufferers. Oh, what a moment of agony must that have been! The aged female was no more; but Van Kuik, whilst his body yielded to the fury of the flames, was still sensibly alive to all that was passing around him. He had witnessed the firing of the beacons, and looked upon it as the interposition of Heaven in his favour; but still the crackling faggots continued to blaze higher and higher, and still their scorching fierceness was increased. He saw the desperate struggle of the conspirators to force their way to his rescue, and hope and despair alternately took possession of his soul. Amidst the fury of the contest he could distinguish the drapery of a female, and conviction told him none but the devoted Agatha could be there. The flames came lashing around the bodies of the victims, and in his agony Van Kuik contrived to slip the iron bolt from across his mouth. Instantly his voice was upraised, and he called to his brave associates to persevere; for the fight was now so close, that the burning ashes licked up the blood of the wounded and the dying.

The appeal was not made in vain; a tremendous shout renewed the onset, and several of the conspirators rushed to the environs of the stake, from whence they plucked the burning faggots; but they

were driven back once more, and a fresh current of air streaming on the embers, again lighted up the funereal pile.

Horror and dismay filled the soul of Agatha, as she looked upon the fearful spectacle ; and desperation seemed to nerve her heart as she urged the party to the conflict. At this moment, a loud appalling shout was heard in the rear of the fire, and in the next minute the Gueuxes, under Vander Mark, who had made an easy conquest of the garrison, came pouring in upon the now terrified and flying Spaniards, and putting all to the sword.

The rallying conspirators once more crowded round the stake, and commenced their benevolent labours. But the succour came too late ; the iron chain, heated to a red heat, had burned into the very vitals of the painter, who raised his shrivelled hands, exclaiming, "I have fought the good fight ; I have kept the faith !" and then, with a convulsive shriek, expired.

The wretched Agatha had pressed forward with the foremost, but her spirit recoiled when she saw the seamed and scorched body of her husband. Her heart had swelled almost to bursting, with eager expectation that he would be saved ; but now, when hope had perished, and life had lost its silken ties, she bowed her head upon her bosom, and as they had been pleasant and lovely in their lives, so in their death they were not divided.

But Dort was free ; the reformed religion was established, and the first sermon that was preached in public by one of its ministers, was delivered a few days afterwards upon the slaked ashes that had dried the life-stream from the painter's heart.

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